
P A T T E R N S O F P O W E R

British
Iraq

The Complete Study

1914 — 1932 — 1958

Thomas J. Bryan

with Claude (Anthropic)

Held as tested, not revealed.

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PREFACE AND OUTLINE

*Front matter · how this study was made, the disciplines it holds
itself to, and a map of its thirteen parts*

*A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as
tested, not revealed*

The collaboration

This is a case study in the Patterns of Power series, applying the series' framework to British Iraq, from the landing at Basra in 1914 to the independence of 1932, with the coups and the killings that followed — down to the destruction of the whole order in 1958 — as its coda. The framework is a lens for reading how any order of power is founded, dressed, and held: the floor of force beneath every order, the robe of doctrine laid over the floor to make the force cheap, the settlement that divides the spoils, the cost column in which each subject prices defection, the seam that manages the belief on which the whole depends, the default by which an elite coordinates without instruction, and — running through all of it — position logic, the proposition that rulers in like positions converge on like solutions because a position poses a problem with only a few good answers.

Iraq was chosen because it completes a set. The series turns on a single question put to every conquest — whether the order the conqueror overran had left a seizable seat, a working apex he could occupy and rule through — because the whole of his experience, how dear the holding is and how brittle, how it extracts and how it ends, follows from the answer. Two prior studies had furnished two of the answers. In the caliphate of Northern Nigeria, Britain found a chair and sat in it, ruling millions through the emirs at almost no cost, because the belief that made the order cheap was already there and already fixed to a throne. Among the Kikuyu of Kenya, Britain found no chair at all, an order whose authority had pooled into no apex, and forged one — raising servants of the broken order into chiefs on the strength of the rifle, and paying

for the forgery every year. Iraq is the third answer, and the one the series had not yet isolated. Here Britain found neither a seat to take nor a headless field in which to forge one, but a decapitated order: an apex destroyed within living memory — the Ottoman sultan-caliph defeated and the caliphate itself abolished — leaving a surplus of seats, none of which the conqueror could occupy. So Britain reached for the last resort on the menu of ways to hold a conquered order. It imported an apex: a Hashemite prince from Arabia, with a borrowed sacral prestige and no foot of Iraqi ground, set over three welded provinces from outside. This study is the anatomy of that importation — the imported chair — and of the order built beneath it, and of why an order assembled that way could be held cheaply for a generation and then fall, in a single morning, when its foreign floor was written off.

The study was built the way the series is built, one module at a time. The author brought the framework, its spine, and the case, and held the collaboration to its disciplines — and brought, at two of the sharpest turns, the analytic core of the modules themselves: the reading of the imported king's dependence as the linchpin of a default engineered so that each beneficiary, defending his own conferred position, holds the whole arrangement up; and the insistence, against the model's first instinct, that a durable order is never overthrown by the people it rules, but only when something breaks above them. Claude, Anthropic's model, did the research — verifying every load-bearing quotation, date, and figure by web search against a source reproducing the primary text before any module was written — and produced the drafts, applying the framework module by module, each presented and confirmed before the next was begun. The framework's concepts are the series'; the Iraqi application, and the refinements it yielded, are the work of the collaboration.

Its engine throughout is the method of information asymmetry. The study exists to show the gap between what was said at the metropole and what was done in the colony, and it works by setting the exact public words beside the exact words of the ground — Maude's proclamation of 1917, claiming "absolute and supreme control" and disclaiming conquest "as liberators" in a single sentence, beside the RAF officer's boast that within forty-five minutes a full-sized village could be "practically wiped out"; the mandate's "sacred trust of civilisation" beside the deportation of the majority's own clergy as "a group of

aliens"; the plebiscite that returned ninety-six per cent beside the coronation of an imported king to the strains of "God Save the King"; the trusteeship argued as "ripe for independence" at Geneva beside the plea for protection rejected two months after the auditor's power to grant it had lapsed. It lays out the arithmetic and leaves the sum to the reader. It does not preach the conclusion.

The study went in holding a premise about its own subject, and the sources sharpened it. The premise was that Iraq would prove another instance of the chair found or the chair forged; the evidence returned a third thing, the chair imported, resting on a starting condition — the decapitated order — that the series had not named before, and the whole study reorganised itself around that discovery. Where a figure or a date could not be run to ground, it was given as a range with its claimants named — most of all the toll of the massacre that opens the independent state, which the record gives as anywhere between six hundred and several thousand depending entirely on who did the counting, and which the study reports as exactly that: a number that cannot be settled, because the order that inflicted it did not keep it.

The disciplines

Five rules govern every module.

Quotation. Public-domain primary sources — the Covenant, treaties, proclamations, fatwas, official despatches, parliamentary records, the words of the men who ran the order — are quoted exactly, at the length the argument needs, because in an order held together by legal fictions the precise wording is the evidence and not its decoration. Modern copyrighted scholarship is paraphrased, briefly, and credited.

No fabrication. No quotation, date, attribution, or figure is ever invented or reconstructed from memory. What cannot be verified against a source reproducing the primary text is dropped or flagged, never guessed; contested figures are given as ranges, and where the record itself was never kept — as, for the dead of Simele, it was not — the range is reported with each of its claimants named and none of them crowned.

Gravity without partisanship. Suffering is held with gravity, and the study refuses both flattery and demonisation. It writes from the top of the order,

where the men who ran it actually stood, and takes their professions of trusteeship with the grain of salt they took them with — asking not whether the story was sincere but what it was for and whether the machine's spending changed. Legibility is not pardon: to explain an order's logic, even to credit its competence, is never to excuse it.

Contribution. Every module returns a refinement to the framework, stated plainly in its closing section, rather than merely applying the framework to the case. The discipline is one spine and its confirmations, not a manufactured new law each chapter; where the evidence refused a finding, the study says so and leaves the finding resting on the case that carried it.

Held as tested, not revealed. The pattern is treated as something discovered and tested against the evidence, not handed down as doctrine — a lens laid over the record, a tendency and never a law.

What British Iraq added to the framework

Because this study is the series' case for the imported chair — the conquest that found no seat it could take and fetched one from outside — it was able to isolate a third answer to the question the whole corpus turns on, and, with it, a cluster of refinements the earlier cases had not required. Chief among them: that a conqueror may meet not only a seizable apex or a headless field but a decapitated order, an apex destroyed and un-replaceable, which drives him to import a face with legitimacy manufactured elsewhere; that the imported chair buys prestige already attached but neither fit nor control, and is the most expensive and most brittle draw on the menu, because a king with no base of his own is pinned to his sponsor and defends the sponsor's arrangement by default, while the very credentials that make him useful give him an agenda the sponsor cannot fully hold; that the mandate is a self-liquidating robe, the first in the collection to promise its own expiry, whose management-task is the gap between the nominal independence it must grant and the substantive control the metropole means to keep — so that it does not free the ward but invents flag-independence; that a robe facing an institutional auditor conceals not by burning its record but by publishing a curated one, the form of the seam dictated by the form of the robe; that a self-liquidating robe uses its promised

ending to shed its auditor at the precise moment the auditor would otherwise have had to act; that the floor may be made cheap not by belief but by technological reach, air control standing to the aeroplane as surveillance stands to the register — the tell of a belief that never took; that the cost column may be held not by density but by delegation, through manufactured intermediaries each pinned to the order, cheap but brittle; that extraction may take a third fork, the point-resource, which de-links the state from its people entirely, draws the state's border to the resource's edge, and funds the floor that holds the people off the resource; that formation over a manufactured demos must choose a key, and the key becomes the fracture; that the foreclosure of a majority is the signature of the installed-minority order and is achieved by denaturalisation, defining the majority out of the nation that rules in its name; that there are two kinds of self-running order, the belief-based and the engineered-self-interest kind, the second cheap and tight but narrow and floor-dependent, so that it looks self-running only while the floor stands behind it; that a colonial order collapses when the metropole's floor empties rather than when the ruled beat it, and that the floor may empty without cracking, written off at the metropole while every soldier is retained; that the deferred cost of a minority-proxy floor comes due, in full, on the proxy, the day the ruler withdraws; that the grim accounting of such an order cannot be closed, because the order counted its bombs and its barrels and never its dead; and, largest of all and refining the recursion the whole collection rests on, that a built order becomes real only if the build takes — and an imported apex set over a welded fracture above a foreclosed majority is the one build that cannot take, so that Iraq is the conquest that was made and never became the nation, a construction with its seams still showing a century on.

The arc

A landscape opening and twelve modules, each with a framework function and its own evocative title.

Landscape — the two orders on the eve of the Mandate. *Three Provinces and No Throne.* The oldest governed ground on earth, its recursion a dozen conquests deep — the Abbasid caliphate over Sumer and Babylon, the Mongol

ruin over the caliphate, the Ottoman conquest over the ruin — met by a war-exhausted Britain that came for the road to India and the oil; and the decapitated order it found, an apex destroyed and a clerical apex it could never occupy, that drove it to import a seat.

1 — The Floor of Force. *Within Forty-Five Minutes.* A proclamation of liberation issued in the same breath as a claim to "absolute and supreme control"; the revolt the mujtahids raised, which cost too much to put down the old way; and the new floor Britain reached for — air control, control without occupation, the bomber's reach standing in for the belief that never came.

2 — The Settlement. *God Save the King.* A king imported from Arabia to a country that had never existed, ratified by a plebiscite of ninety-six per cent and crowned to the coloniser's anthem; the state given to the Sunni ex-Ottoman officers and the land to the tribal shaykhs; and the mandate relabelled a treaty of alliance because "mandate" was a word the ruled would not swallow.

3 — The Robe. *Able to Stand Alone.* Trusteeship written for the first time into international law and fitted with an auditor at Geneva and, alone among the robes in this collection, an expiry — the first robe built with a fuse, whose whole art is to grant the form of the promised ending while keeping the substance.

4 — Formation. *In That Case We Cannot Appoint You.* The manufacture of a nation in a single official key — Arab, secular, Sunni-led — by a schoolmaster as imported as the king; and the two populations it could not incorporate, the Shia majority it held under suspicion and the Kurds it had no place for, so that the formation meant to close the fracture handed it an ideology.

5 — The Cost Column. *Forbidden to Leave the Land.* Why the ordinary subject complied when the belief on offer was one he did not share — an order too cheap to garrison him and too unbelieved to trust him, holding him through a manufactured landlord who bound him by debt, a minority under arms, and a reach from the air, a full cost column held not by density but by delegation.

6 — Extraction. *Mr Five Per Cent.* The wealth at a single point in the ground, drawn out by a concession to a company owned by everyone but Iraq — down to a private dealmaker who held five per cent and became the richest

man alive — while Iraq took a rent; a third fork of extraction that needs no peasant, draws the border to its own edge, and funds the floor that holds the people off it.

7 — Information and Suppression. *Nothing Could Be Done.* The seam between Baghdad and the auditor at Geneva, worked not by burning the record but by publishing a curated one; the petition that gave the ruled a voice and no power; and a termination timed so the auditor's authority lapsed at the exact moment the ruled most needed it.

8 — Elite Coordination and the Default. *Vulnerable Enough to Remain Dependent.* England built Iraq like England — a king who confers the spoils and beneficiaries who defend the king because their wealth is his to grant; but the king was imported and had no army of his own, so the whole arrangement was engineered to run itself by each man's self-interest, until the beneficiaries it had formed turned against it and the floor had to be cashed in to hold the machine the sponsor had only appeared to let run alone.

9 — Plurality or Foreclosure. *A Group of Aliens.* Whether the three monopolies of violence, wealth, and trusted interpretation were held by one coalition or separated into hands that could check it; and how the majority was not admitted late but foreclosed at the founding — its one uncaptured counterweight, the Shia clergy, broken by deporting its leaders as foreigners, while the risings this produced were crushed by the floor and never once became the agent of change.

10 — Change and Collapse. *Two or Three Rounds Each.* How the order ended, read from above and not from the street: the mandate's end in 1932 no collapse but the self-liquidating robe firing, the floor holding; and the fall of 1958, when the metropole's floor emptied without cracking, the reach written off after Suez, and the officers the arrangement had formed walked into the apex against almost no defence, and reloaded the same shape under a new name.

11 — The Grim Accounting. *Six Hundred or Three Thousand.* The cost counted on every side, and the discovery that it cannot finally be counted: the state built and the first Arab sovereignty won, set against the majority foreclosed and the minority the mandate armed and then abandoned,

massacred a year after independence in a killing whose dead are given as six hundred or three thousand or six thousand depending entirely on who did the counting.

12 — Convergence and Divergence. *The Weld That Never Fused.* The imported chair as the third answer to the one question the series turns on, the convergence explained by position and not by any hidden hand; the divergence that is the case's deepest finding — that the imported, welded order was the one kind of conquest that never became real; and the strongest case for the thing, stated in full and answered without flinching.

A note on sources.

This front matter is descriptive and makes no primary-source claims of its own; every factual assertion about the case is established, with its sources and its flags, in the module it summarises. The framework it describes is the series'; the disciplines it lists are the ones the modules hold themselves to and document in their own closing notes. The reader who wishes to test this study should begin with those notes, which are written to make that testing possible — including where it would embarrass the argument.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

THREE PROVINCES AND NO THRONE

*Landscape · the two orders on the eve of the Mandate — an
ancient ground of buried conquests whose living apex the war had
just destroyed, and whose one authority that still commanded the
majority no conqueror could ever occupy, set beside a war-
exhausted Britain that came for the road to India and the oil and
found no seat to sit in*

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The order that was older than order

Every study in this series begins by insisting that the conqueror never meets a blank field, only an older order already naturalised, itself the residue of some earlier conquest — and nowhere is that insistence so nearly an understatement as here, because the ground the British took in 1917 was the oldest continuously governed ground on earth. This was Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers, where the first cities and the first kingships and the first written law had appeared four thousand years before, where Sumer and Akkad and Babylon had risen and fallen, where Alexander had died. And it was, above all, the seat of the Abbasid caliphate. Baghdad had been founded in 762 by the caliph al-Mansur as the capital of the Sunni Islamic world — the City of Peace, planned in a perfect circle on the west bank of the Tigris — and for five centuries it was the center of the greatest empire of its age, the place from which the caliph, the successor of the Prophet, was acknowledged from Spain to Central Asia. Then, in February 1258, the Mongols under Hulagu came. They sacked the city, put its libraries and its people to the sword, and executed the last reigning Abbasid caliph, al-Musta'sim; and by one account the revenues of Arabian Iraq fell within a lifetime to a tenth of what they had been, and the country entered a decline that lasted into the sixteenth century. The recursion

here is not two or three conquests deep, as in the other studies. It is a dozen deep, and one of its layers is the destruction of the very institution — the caliphate — whose ghost would haunt everything the twentieth century tried to build on the same ground.

The naturalised conquest the British met

The order the British actually overran was the Ottoman one, and it too was a former conquest grown into the furniture of reality. Suleiman the Magnificent took Baghdad in 1534, a generation after the Ottoman victory over the Safavids at Chaldiran in 1514 had settled which of the two great Muslim empires would hold the land between the rivers; and the Ottomans held it, with interruptions, for close to four centuries, long enough that Ottoman rule was simply the condition of the world into which the people of the three provinces were born. But the arrangement carried, from its first day, the fracture that everything after it would inherit. The Ottomans were Sunni, and they ruled Mesopotamia deliberately as a Sunni-controlled frontier held against the Shia Safavid empire on the far bank of the border in Persia — so that a Sunni apex over a Shia-majority Arab population was not an accident of the modern state but the settled arrangement of a four-hundred-year-old conquest, a former build so naturalised that it looked like the order of things. The land was administered as three separate provinces, three vilayets, that had never been a single country: Mosul in the north, Kurdish and mixed, looking toward Anatolia; Baghdad in the center, its towns Sunni and its administration the seat of Ottoman authority; Basra in the south, on the Gulf, its population heavily Shia and its face turned toward India and the sea. Under the confessional self-government the Ottomans called the millet system each community ordered its own personal law, and the three provinces were bound together by nothing more than the sultan's distant sovereignty.

And that sovereignty, the record is plain, had never won the belief of the majority it ruled. The two standing problems of Ottoman legitimacy in Iraq, as the scholarship states them without hedging, were that most of the population was Shia and that a very large part of it was tribal, and that many of the tribes were themselves wholly or partly Shia. The Sunni-Ottoman apex held the Shia

majority not by their conviction that it was rightful — they held no such conviction — but by the caliph's sacral prestige among the Sunni minority who staffed the towns and the administration, by intermittent force, and by the external pressure of the Safavid and then Qajar threat that made even a resented Sunni order preferable, to some, to conquest from Shia Persia. It was, in the vocabulary this series has built, an order whose robe had taken deeply among a minority and never among the mass — held cheaply where it was believed and expensively where it was not.

The authority no conqueror could occupy

For the Shia majority did not lack an authority they believed in. They simply believed in one the state did not own and no conqueror could ever take. South of Baghdad stood the shrine cities — Najaf, where the tomb of Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and the first Shia imam, made the town the spiritual capital of Twelver Shiism, and Karbala, where the martyrdom of Ali's son Husayn was the founding grief of the faith. In those cities lived the marja'iyya, the hierarchy of the grand mujtahids, the maraji' whose rulings the devout were bound to follow, funded independently by the khums the faithful paid directly to them, drawing students and scholars from Persia and India as well as Arab Iraq, and answering to no sultan and no governor. This was a true apex — a source of authority that commanded the loyalty of the Shia majority as the Ottoman state never had — but it was a clerical apex, transnational, and by its nature set against infidel rule; and its relations with the Sunni state that nominally governed it ran at times to open war, as when an Ottoman governor stormed and sacked Karbala in 1843 with thousands of dead. This is the fact that would decide the shape of everything the British attempted. The order they were about to inherit contained a real and living apex that held the belief of most of the people in it — and it was the one apex on earth that a Christian empire could not, under any circumstances, sit down in. When the country rose against them in 1920, it would rise on the fatwas of these mujtahids; and no proconsul, however clever, could answer a fatwa by occupying the chair it came from.

The road to India and the oil

The order that came for all this had not, at first, wanted it. Britain's interest in the head of the Persian Gulf was old and strategic and almost entirely about somewhere else — about India, whose defense was the fixed star of British grand strategy, and about the sea road to it. What sharpened that interest in the years before the war was oil. The Royal Navy had begun converting from coal to oil, and its nearest secure source was the field the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had brought in across the border in Persia, whose refinery on the island of Abadan sat at the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab, within reach of Ottoman guns. So when the Ottomans entered the war on the German side in November 1914, an Indian division was put ashore at Basra at once, its stated purpose to guard the Abadan refinery and the pipeline and the Gulf flank of the road to India — a defensive errand, narrowly conceived, and expected to be brief.

It was not brief, and it was very nearly a catastrophe. Overconfidence sent the 6th (Poona) Division under Major-General Charles Townshend driving up the Tigris toward Baghdad in 1915, until it was checked at Ctesiphon and fell back on the town of Kut al-Amara, where the Ottomans besieged it from December 1915. The relief columns broke themselves on the Ottoman lines through the winter and spring, and on 29 April 1916 the garrison surrendered — some thirteen thousand men, the largest capitulation in British arms to that date, most of whom would die of disease and starvation on the marches into captivity while their general lived out the war in comfort in Istanbul. Kut, coming beside Gallipoli, was one of the two great humiliations of British arms in the war. It brought a parliamentary inquiry, a wholesale reorganisation, and a new commander, Stanley Maude, who rebuilt the force and took Baghdad on 11 March 1917. And behind Baghdad, to the north, lay Mosul and the reports — old, and by now insistent — of vast oil beneath its ground, so that a campaign begun to defend a refinery in Persia ended by acquiring three provinces and, with them, a resource that would turn a strategic afterthought into a possession worth keeping and worth the quarrel with France and Turkey that keeping it would take.

The apex removed, and the seat that was not there

Then the war finished the work the Mongols had begun, and destroyed the apex that had held the mosaic together. The Ottoman Empire signed the armistice of Mudros in October 1918 and was dismembered; and within a few years the office at the top of it was not merely defeated but abolished, as the new Turkish republic put down the sultanate in 1922 and then, in 1924, extinguished the caliphate itself — the thirteen-hundred-year sacral apex of Sunni Islam, the successor's seat that Baghdad had once held and Istanbul held last. The head was not defeated and left standing to be used. It was removed from the world.

And this is the condition in which the framework's central problem reached the British in Iraq, in a form the series had not yet isolated. In the caliphate of Sokoto a few years earlier they had found a chair — a living throne at the apex of a working order — and had simply sat down in it and ruled millions through its occupant at almost no cost. Among the Kikuyu they had found no chair at all, an order whose authority pooled into no seizable seat, and had been driven to forge one, raising a servant of the broken order over his fellows and backing him with nothing but the rifle. Iraq was neither, and it was harder than either. Here there was not the absence of a seat but a surplus of them, and not one that the conqueror could take. The state apex that had commanded the whole — the Ottoman Sunni caliph — had been destroyed and could never be reoccupied by a Christian power, nor indeed by anyone, for the office itself was gone. The one apex that still commanded the majority — the Shia marja'iyya — was a clerical throne an infidel empire could not sit in and could barely negotiate with, and it would shortly raise the country in revolt. And the fragments left on the ground — the Sunni notables and ex-Ottoman officials of the towns, the great tribal shaykhs of the countryside, the Kurdish aghas of the mountains — were pieces, no one of which commanded the whole, and several of which did not wish to be part of any whole at all. Britain could not find a chair, and could not forge one from the fragments that would hold the majority. So it would reach, in the end, for the last and most expensive option on the menu of ways to hold a conquered order: it would import an apex — a prince from Arabia with a borrowed sacral prestige and no foot of ground of his own in Iraq — set him on a throne it manufactured for him, weld the three

provinces into a single state beneath him, and call the assembled thing a nation. What that importation bought, and what it could not buy, and the fracture it papered over instead of healing, is the whole of what follows.

Reading the landscape against the framework

Three things the eve of the Mandate establishes, and one it foreshadows.

First, the conqueror's draw from the menu of ways to hold a conquered order is downstream of the conquered order's own condition — and Iraq isolates a third condition the series had met only in blurred combination before: the decapitated order. It is not the seizable apex of a working order, which a conqueror rents by occupying it. It is not the headless distribution of authority that pooled into no apex at all, which a conqueror must forge a collaborator to stand in for. It is an order that had possessed a commanding apex within living memory and had it destroyed, leaving a substrate of fragments and one surviving authority that the conqueror, for reasons of creed, could never occupy. A decapitated order cannot be sat in, because the seat is gone; it cannot be cheaply forged into, because a living rival authority already holds the majority's belief; and so it drives the conqueror toward the costliest solution of all, the importation of an apex whose legitimacy was manufactured somewhere else — which is the whole subject of this study, and the thing that makes Iraq the series' case for the imported chair.

Second, the recursion runs deeper here than in any case the collection has taken, and its depth is itself the finding. The order the British met was the residue not of one prior conquest but of a stack of them reaching back to the beginning of states, and the specific arrangement they would inherit and reproduce — a Sunni minority set above a Shia majority — was not a modern colonial invention but a four-hundred-year-old Ottoman conquest so naturalised that it read as the nature of the country. To name that origin is not to call the order false; the Ottoman world was authentically the world of the Sunni towns that believed in it, as the shrine cities were authentically the world of the Shia who believed in the mujtahids. The point is narrower and sharper: this order had just been decapitated, and a decapitated order is precisely not a self-running one. The furniture of reality had had its keystone knocked out,

and what the British inherited was not a machine they could drive but a set of pieces from which the keystone was missing — and which they would try to replace with a piece cut in Arabia and fitted from London.

Third, and foreshadowing everything: an apex cut elsewhere and fitted from outside will reproduce the fracture of the order it is set over, not heal it, because a conqueror can import a face and a title and a lineage, but he cannot import a belief the majority never held. The king Britain was about to bring would be a Sunni over a Shia majority, exactly as the Ottomans had been; his sacral prestige would be real but foreign, prestige among Arabs of the desert and the Sunni towns and not among the mujtahids of Najaf or the tribes of the Euphrates; and the robe under which the whole arrangement would be assembled — the Mandate, the trusteeship of the new League of Nations, a robe that for the first time in this series would promise its own expiry — would face, like every colonial robe, toward the metropole and the auditors at Geneva and not toward the ruled. What it cost to hold a country whose apex was borrowed, whose majority believed in an authority the state could never own, and whose very existence as a single country had to be manufactured and then maintained by force, is what this study now sets out to count.

A note on sources. The exact figures and dates given here are established, with their sources, in the modules that use them; this landscape is descriptive and makes its factual claims on the standard record. The three Ottoman vilayets of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra and their distinct compositions, the Ottoman conquest of Baghdad in 1534 following the battle of Chaldiran in 1514, the four centuries of Ottoman rule, and the millet system are from the standard histories; the founding of Baghdad as the Abbasid capital in 762 and the Mongol sack and the execution of the last caliph in 1258 are from the standard record (and *Britannica* on the later Abbasids). The composition of the population of about three million on the eve of the Mandate — a Shia majority of more than half, a Sunni Arab minority of under a fifth, Kurds of around a fifth, and remaining minorities of Christians, Jews, Yazidis, Sabaeans, and Turkmen — is given as the standard estimates, with the caution that no reliable census existed and the figures are approximate and contested. The *marja'iyya* and the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala, and the 1843 sack of Karbala, are from the standard record. The British campaign — the landing at Basra in November 1914 to guard the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's Abadan refinery and the road to India, the advance up the Tigris, the siege and surrender of Kut al-Amara (December 1915 to 29 April 1916, some

*thirteen thousand taken), and Maude's capture of Baghdad on 11 March 1917 — follows the standard military histories (the National Army Museum; the 1914–1918-Online encyclopedia). The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire after the Mudros armistice of October 1918, the abolition of the sultanate in 1922, and the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 are from the standard record. Modern scholarship on the period (Hanna Batatu; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*) is paraphrased and credited where used; contested figures are given as ranges. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.*

WITHIN FORTY-FIVE MINUTES

Module 1 · The Floor of Force — a proclamation of liberation issued in the same breath as a claim to "absolute and supreme control"; a revolt raised by the mujtahids that cost too much to put down the old way; and the new floor Britain reached for to hold an unbelieved order cheaply — not belief, but the bomber's reach, control without occupation, a full-sized village wiped out within the hour

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

The liberator's first sentence

The order announced itself in a single sentence that contained its own contradiction, and the contradiction is the whole of what this module has to unfold. On 19 March 1917, eight days after his troops walked into Baghdad, Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Maude issued a proclamation to the city — a flowery document actually drafted three thousand miles away in London by Sir Mark Sykes — and its load-bearing line reads, in full: *"In order to complete this task, I am charged with absolute and supreme control of all regions in which British troops operate; but our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators."* Read it slowly, because the series exists to read sentences like this one slowly. The floor and the robe are printed in the same breath, joined by a single "but": *absolute and supreme control* on the one side of the conjunction, *not as conquerors but as liberators* on the other. The operative clause and the legitimating clause share a comma. There is no gap here for a historian to expose between what was said and what was meant, because both were said, in one line, over one signature — the taking and the story of the taking, set down together for anyone willing to read to the end of the sentence.

The proclamation reached further back for its robe than any in the series so far. It told the people of Baghdad that *"since the days of Halaka your city and your lands have been subject to the tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunk in desolation"* — Halaka being Hulagu, the Mongol who had sacked the city in 1258, whose name this study has already had cause to write. Seven centuries of history were pressed into service to cast the newest conqueror as the liberator from all the others: Britain came, the document said, to end the long night that the Mongols had begun and the Turks had prolonged. It is the deepest layer of the recursion turned into propaganda — the ruin of one former conquest invoked to gild the arrival of the next. What "absolute and supreme control" would mean, once the liberated declined to be grateful for it, is the subject of everything that follows.

What the liberated were given

What the proclamation promised, in its softer passages, was participation — the people of Baghdad invited to manage their own affairs "in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British Army." What arrived instead was an occupation government run largely on the lines of British India, its senior posts filled by British and Indian officials under the Acting Civil Commissioner, Sir Arnold Wilson, with the experienced ex-Ottoman officials turned out, new land laws imposed, and new taxes laid on — including, with a tin ear that would cost dearly, a tax on burial in the great Shia cemetery at Najaf, where the faithful came from across the Shia world to be interred near the Imam. And in April 1920 the San Remo conference converted the occupation into a title, awarding Iraq to Britain as a mandate. The liberation was an annexation, and the annexed could see it as plainly as the reader of the proclamation's first sentence can.

The revolt the mujtahids raised

They rose in the summer of 1920, and the rising came from precisely the quarter the landscape of this country said it would. It began in Baghdad with mass demonstrations in which Sunni and Shia notables and embittered officers of the disbanded Ottoman army made common cause, and it became a war

when it spread to the Shia tribes of the middle Euphrates — and what turned protest into war was the authority no conqueror could occupy. The grand mujtahid Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi issued a ruling that service in the British administration was unlawful, and then a second that came as close to a call to arms as a careful jurist would go: *"It is the duty of the Iraqis to demand their rights. In demanding them they should maintain peace and order. But if the English prevent them from obtaining their rights it is permitted to make use of defensive force."* The clerical throne that the British could destroy neither by argument nor by occupation had spoken, and the tribes answered. At its height the revolt put perhaps a hundred and thirty thousand tribesmen in the field, half of them with modern rifles, and engaged something like a third of the country; its leaders were drawn, tellingly, from exactly the groups the occupation had demoted — the mujtahids, the former Ottoman civil servants, the ex-officers of the Turkish armies, men whose standing the new order had stripped.

It was put down in roughly three months, and put down hard — with aerial bombardment, with the burning of villages, with a toll the sources place somewhere between six and ten thousand Iraqi dead against a few hundred British and Indian. But the number that changed British policy was not written in blood. It was written in the ledger. The suppression cost the British exchequer on the order of forty million pounds — about twice the entire annual budget allotted to Iraq — and holding the country afterwards on the same model threatened to run to some twenty million pounds a year. To a Britain three years out of the Great War, bankrupt, and in the grip of a ferocious drive for retrenchment, that was simply not a payable sum. The revolt of 1920 did not defeat the British; the tribes could no more expel a modern army than any unorganised population can. What the revolt did was more consequential than a defeat. It priced the old floor out of the market, and forced the order to find a cheaper way to stand on an unbelieving country.

Control without occupation

The cheaper way had two halves, and this module concerns the second; the first — the manufacture of a native apex to put a governing face on the whole — is

the settlement that comes next. The half that held the ground was a new kind of floor, and it had a doctrine and a name. At the Cairo Conference of March 1921, the new Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, together with Sir Hugh Trenchard of the Royal Air Force, settled that Iraq would henceforth be held not by an army garrisoning its districts but principally from the air; and in October 1922 the RAF formally assumed responsibility for the defence and internal control of the country. The doctrine was called, without irony, *control without occupation*: rather than soldiers stationed in every restive province, a handful of squadrons based at a few airfields, able to reach any village in the country within an hour and to destroy it. The garrison shrank, and the annual cost fell from the unaffordable figures of the occupation to a fraction of them — which was the entire attraction, for air control was sold to the Treasury and to Parliament expressly as the cheap way to hold a turbulent possession, and it was in Iraq that the young Air Force proved the concept. In proving that a country could be held from the sky for a few million pounds a year, the RAF also secured its own survival as a service independent of the Army, so that the method and the institution that flew it were bound together from the start: the cheapness of the floor was the reason the Air Force existed to lay it.

What real bombing means

What "control without occupation" meant, at the altitude where the bombs left the racks and the ground where they landed, has to be set down with the gravity it demands and no more colour than the record supplies. The RAF bombed the villages of tribes that refused to pay their taxes or to submit to the government's authority — sometimes after dropping a warning to evacuate, sometimes not — and against the reed-built villages of the marsh country it used incendiaries, and it used bombs fused to explode after a delay so that those who returned to the rubble would be caught. It was, stripped of the doctrine's euphemism, the collective punishment of a civilian population from a height at which that population could not shoot back. And the men who conducted it did not always trouble to dress it up. A squadron leader named Arthur Harris — the same officer who two decades later would direct the firestorms over Hamburg and Dresden — reported of his work in Iraq that the Arab and the Kurd "*now know what real bombing means, in casualties and damage; they now know that*

within forty-five minutes a full-sized village can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or wounded." That was the contemporary boast. In his memoirs, long after, the same man reached for the vocabulary of the home audience, recalling only that by burning the villages "after we'd warned them to get out" the RAF had put the inhabitants "to the maximum amount of inconvenience, without physical hurt," until they gave up their raiding — the identical rewording, aimed at the metropole, that this series has watched a labour circular and a slave code and a trusteeship paper all perform. The thing the euphemism covered had not changed between the two accounts; only the audience had.

Behind the bombing stood a proposal that has become the most quoted line of the whole episode, and it must be handled with exactness rather than repeated as a slogan. In a War Office minute of 1919 the Secretary of State for War had written: *"I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes... It will cause great inconvenience and spread a lively terror."* The authorship and the words are not in doubt. What is genuinely in doubt, and disputed among serious historians to this day, is whether lethal gas — as distinct from the tear gas that was certainly shipped to the theatre, and the high-explosive and incendiary bombing that certainly happened — was actually dropped on Iraqis, and if so where and how much. The study reports the minute as verified and leaves the question of use unresolved, because the record does not close it and the argument's weight does not depend on closing it. The bombing is not disputed. The bombing is the floor.

Reading the floor of force against the framework

The case returns one refinement to the framework and confirms one method, and foreshadows the settlement to come.

The refinement is that air control is a floor made cheap not by belief but by reach, and that it is the exact technological analogue of a tell the series has already named. Recall the two ordinary states of a floor. Where a robe has taken, the floor is cheap because the ruled police themselves, and force can retire to the margins. Where a robe has not taken, the floor is dear, because every

subject must be reached and held by a man with a rifle who has to be housed and paid and fed on the spot. Iraq faced the second condition — its imported order would never be believed by the majority — and it found a third way out of the expense, one that neither the believed order nor the unbelieved garrison had had available: it substituted the aeroplane's reach for the believed subject's self-policing. A small force, unable to occupy the country and unable to persuade it, could nonetheless hold it, because it could reach any village within the hour and destroy it, and everyone knew this. The bomber circling over the reed huts does precisely what the metal tag did at the African's throat in another colony: it stands in for a conviction that never came. There it was surveillance that betrayed the missing belief; here it is ordnance. Air control is the floor of an order that could not be believed and could not afford to be occupied, and reached instead for the cheapest coercion that technology would sell it — so that the aeroplane over the village is the exact measure of the robe that was not there.

The method the case confirms is the one this series runs on, and Iraq offers its purest single specimen. The order did not first promise liberation and later betray the promise with bombs; it wrote "absolute and supreme control" and "as liberators" into the same sentence at the very beginning, and the forty-five minutes were latent in the first clause all along. The gap between what an order says and what it does is real, but it is not always a gap in time, a fair promise later broken. Sometimes, as here, it is a gap between two clauses of one sentence, printed together on day one, and the whole art of reading such an order is refusing to stop at the comma.

And the case foreshadows what a floor of force cannot do by itself. Bombs can hold ground; they cannot make a country. An aeroplane can wipe out a village but it cannot collect a land tax, or seat a council, or tell the auditors of the new League of Nations that a nation is being born under a sacred trust. For all of that the cheap floor needed a cheap facade above it — an apex the empire could put a face and a lineage to, a king whose legitimacy had been manufactured somewhere else and could be imported and set over the three welded provinces to do the governing that the bombers could only enforce. The importing of that apex, and the fracture it was meant to cover, is the settlement, and it is where this study turns next.

A note on sources. Maude's Proclamation of Baghdad, issued 19 March 1917 and drafted by Sir Mark Sykes — the clause claiming "absolute and supreme control" while disavowing conquest "as liberators," and the invocation of "the days of Halaka" — is quoted from the reproduced text (the World War I Document Archive at Brigham Young University, and as reproduced in later reporting). The 1920 revolt — its origin in Baghdad among Sunni and Shia notables and disbanded Ottoman officers, its spread to the middle-Euphrates Shia tribes, the fatwas of Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi (quoted as reproduced), the peak tribal strength of about 130,000, the toll (Iraqi dead given here as a range of roughly six to ten thousand, British and Indian dead in the hundreds), and the cost of suppression of about £40 million against an Iraqi annual budget roughly half that, with continued occupation estimated near £20 million a year — follows the standard record and scholarship (Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; the contemporary and secondary accounts), paraphrased. The air-control scheme — the Cairo Conference of March 1921, the RAF's assumption of responsibility for Iraq in October 1922, the advocacy of Churchill and Trenchard, the doctrine of "control without occupation," and the sharp reduction in cost that was its rationale — follows the standard scholarship (David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*; Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia*; Charles Townshend), paraphrased, with monetary figures given as approximate. Arthur Harris's contemporary report that a village could be "practically wiped out" within forty-five minutes with a third of its people killed or wounded, and his later, softened recollection, are quoted as reproduced in the scholarship and reporting. Churchill's War Office minute of 1919 favouring "poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes" is quoted as reproduced; the separate question of whether lethal gas was actually used in Iraq is expressly left disputed and unresolved, as the record leaves it. Contested figures are given as ranges. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.

GOD SAVE THE KING

Module 2 · The Settlement — a king imported from Arabia to a country that had never existed, chosen by forty British officials and ratified by a plebiscite that returned ninety-six per cent, crowned in Baghdad to the strains of the coloniser's own anthem because the manufactured nation had none of its own; the spoils divided beneath him with the Sunni ex-Ottoman officers who got the state and the tribal shaykhs who got the land; and the mandate relabelled a treaty of alliance because "mandate" was a word the ruled would not swallow

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The settlement no one in the country made

A settlement divides the spoils among the men who won and the men who will help hold what was won, and the record of who got what, on what terms, is the anatomy of the order. Iraq's settlement has a peculiarity that no other in the series shares, and it is the whole of the module: the central act of it — the choice of the man who would sit at the apex of the new state — was not made in Iraq at all. It was made in a hotel on the bank of the Nile, by some forty British officials, with two Iraqis in the room, who were informed of the decision after it had been taken. The Cairo Conference of March 1921 gathered the greatest concentration of imperial expertise the Middle East would ever see in one place — the new Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, in the chair; beside him T. E. Lawrence, whom the newsreels had just made famous; Gertrude Bell, the Oriental Secretary who knew the tribes; Sir Percy Cox, the High Commissioner — a gathering Churchill himself jokingly called the Forty Thieves. Its purpose was retrenchment: to find a way to hold Britain's new possessions without the money and the troops the 1920 revolt had shown they would otherwise cost. And its central decision, for Iraq, had in truth been settled in London weeks before, in meetings with the candidate himself: Faisal

ibn Hussein would be king. On 14 March the two Iraqi representatives present — the only Arabs at the table — were told what had been decided. The apex of the nation was chosen by the nation's conqueror and announced to its people as a result.

A king without a kingdom

The man they chose is the key to the whole arrangement, because everything the settlement rests on what he brought and what he lacked. Faisal was a Hashemite, of the family of the Prophet, whose ancestors had held authority in Mecca and Medina for a thousand years; he had been the field leader of the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans, the fame of which — burnished by Lawrence — had made him the most celebrated Arab of his generation. He was also, at the moment Britain reached for him, a king without a kingdom. The Syrian National Congress had proclaimed him king of Syria in March 1920; the French army had thrown him off that throne four months later at the battle of Maysalun, in July, and driven him into exile. And he had no foot of ground in Iraq at all — he was not an Iraqi, had never governed there, and controlled none of the factions that had fought the British in 1920. Britain took a king the French had just discarded and grafted him onto a country he had never seen.

Why him, then, and not a man of the country? The British reasoning, as the scholarship reconstructs it, is the imported chair's logic stated with unusual candour: Faisal possessed nationalist and Islamic credentials broad enough to give him appeal across the fractured land, and he was at the same time weak enough — rootless enough — to remain dependent on the power that had installed him. That is the whole calculation of an imported apex in one sentence. You bring in a face to which legitimacy is already attached, legitimacy you could never have manufactured locally and now do not have to; and because that face has no base of its own in the country, its very rootlessness binds it to you. A king with a thousand years of prophetic descent and no acre of Iraqi ground is a king who needs his sponsor. The prestige was genuine — but it was borrowed, earned in Arabia and Syria and not in Iraq; it was foreign, the standing of a Sunni sharif from the Hejaz set over a population that was mostly Shia and substantially Kurdish; and, as the reign would show, it was not

fully owned, for Faisal arrived with pan-Arab ambitions and a will of his own, and would spend his years on the throne playing his British sponsor against his Arab nationalists.

Ninety-six per cent

A decision taken in Cairo had now to be dressed as a choice made in Baghdad. A single-question plebiscite was arranged, and it returned ninety-six per cent in Faisal's favour — a figure produced, the record is candid, by British political officers who canvassed the tribal shaykhs and the town notables to secure the result, by the marginalising of the opposition, and by the plain pressure of the administration. And the one serious rival had been removed before the voting began. Sayyid Talib, the powerful Basra notable who had wanted the throne for himself, was seized and deported to Ceylon to clear the path; Gertrude Bell had written home, weeks earlier, of the work ahead in Baghdad — "to square the Naqib and to convince Saiyid Talib, if he is convinceable, that his hopes are doomed to disappointment." The plebiscite, then, was not a choice but a ratification, its outcome fixed before a vote was cast. And the coronation that followed on 23 August 1921 sealed the manufacture in a single image that no analysis could improve upon: the imported king was crowned in Baghdad, and because the new nation possessed no anthem of its own — and would possess none until 1932 — the band that played him to his throne played "God Save the King." The king was a Hejazi, the anthem was British, and the power was the High Commissioner's. Three facts in one ceremony, and the whole manufactured nature of the state on open display.

Who got the state, and who got the land

Beneath the throne, the settlement did what every colonial settlement does: it divided the substance among a minority. Here the minority was fixed twice over — by what the conqueror needed to govern and by what the wrecked Ottoman order had left lying available — and two classes took the two halves of the country.

The state went to the Sunni ex-Ottoman officers, the men the histories call the Sharifians. These were Arabs who had trained and served as officers in the

Ottoman army and had then crossed to Faisal's revolt during the war, and they were, almost to a man, Sunni. Nuri al-Said is the type of the whole class: a Baghdadi Sunni, a graduate of the Ottoman Military College in Istanbul, an Ottoman officer who joined the Arab Revolt from a prisoner-of-war camp, chief of staff to Faisal, and thereafter prime minister of Iraq fourteen times across three decades. The Sharifians were the only governing material to hand — literate, administratively and militarily trained, and, unlike the Shia clergy, willing to work the new machine — and so they got the machine: the army, the ministries, the cabinets. And the army they built reproduced the inherited fracture in its very bone, because the officer corps was necessarily drawn from the Sunnis who had served under the Ottomans while the conscripted rank and file were drawn from the Shia tribes, so that Sunni command over Shia numbers was preserved as the settled structure of the one institution that held the state together. An imported Sunni king, a Sunni officer class, a Sunni-commanded army over a Shia majority: the Ottoman arrangement, four centuries old, reconstituted under a crown that Britain had made.

The land went to the tribal shaykhs. To hold the vast countryside without garrisoning it, the British confirmed and enlarged the power of the great tribal shaykhs, and in doing so changed what a shaykh was. Where a shaykh had been first among his tribesmen, holding his place by their consent and his own standing, the mandate made him a landlord — vested him with legal title over the tribal land and with judicial authority over the men who worked it, through the Tribal Disputes Regulations that gave the shaykhs the powers of a court, and, in time, through the Peasants' Rights and Duties Act of 1933 that forbade a tenant to leave the land until every debt to his landlord was paid. The shaykh became a proprietor and the tribesman a bound tenant, and the shaykh's price for this elevation was that he keep his tribe quiet and loyal to the state. So the settlement manufactured a landed class exactly as it had manufactured a king — both raised up by the conqueror, both dependent on him for the standing he had conferred, both set over a population that had not chosen them and could not remove them.

The word they would not use

The whole structure rested on a legal title, and the title was the problem. Iraq had been awarded to Britain at San Remo in 1920 as a mandate — one of the new class of trusteeships the League of Nations had invented — and "mandate" was a word Iraqi opinion would not accept, because it named the thing precisely: a European power governing an Arab country as a ward under tutelage. So Britain, having the substance, gave up the word. It governed not by the mandate but by a treaty. The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922, cast as a treaty of alliance between two friendly states, recast the mandate's every reality in the grammar of partnership: the king would seek British "advice" on all matters touching British interests and on the country's finances; British officials would sit as "advisers" and "inspectors" through eighteen departments of the Iraqi government; Iraq would pay half the cost of maintaining them. The name changed and the control did not — the identical manoeuvre this series has watched a labour circular perform under a reprimand and a slave code perform for a distant parliament, the operative reality kept whole beneath a word the ruled could bear to hear. And it served two audiences at once: the auditors of the League could receive the treaty as the mandate honourably discharged, and Iraqi opinion could be told it lived under an alliance rather than a tutelage. Faisal himself was not deceived — he felt the British had gone back on the promises made to his house, and said so — but he could not prevent the treaty, and signed the arrangement that made his kingdom a ward with a flag.

Reading the settlement against the framework

The case returns the refinement this study was built to isolate, and confirms two of the series' standing findings in a new key.

The refinement is the imported chair, and Iraq is its clearest case. Set the three draws side by side. One conquest found a working throne and sat in it, renting a believed order for almost nothing. Another found no throne at all and forged one, raising a servant of the broken order and backing him with the rifle. This conquest found no throne it could take — the state apex destroyed, the clerical apex un-occupiable — and so imported one, a king with legitimacy manufactured in another country and fitted from London. And the import has

a precise ledger of what it buys and what it does not. It buys, instantly, a face with prestige already attached: Faisal came trailing prophetic descent and the glory of the revolt, a legitimacy no proconsul could have minted on the spot and now did not have to. But it buys neither fit nor control. Not fit, because imported prestige is prestige somewhere else — Faisal's Sunni-Hejazi standing was worth nothing to the mujtahids of Najaf or the tribes of the middle Euphrates, and his crown came down on the exact sectarian fault the Ottomans had left, which it covered without closing. And not full control, because a king is not a clerk: the very credentials that made Faisal useful gave him a constituency and an agenda of his own, and a man who must be seen by his subjects as more than a foreign appointment will, sooner or later, act like more than one. The imported chair is the most expensive draw on the menu because it delivers the appearance of legitimacy while withholding both of the things — a real fit with the ruled, a real dependence on the ruler — that would have made the appearance cheap to keep.

The two confirmations follow from it. The first is that you cannot import a belief the majority never held, and that where there is no single substrate the conqueror must invent the nation his state claims to represent. Iraq was three provinces that had never been one country, welded into a single state and given a manufactured king, ratified by a manufactured plebiscite, crowned to a borrowed anthem. The nation was not discovered; it was declared — and the declaration did not produce the belief. The fault the settlement welded shut, Sunni over Shia and Arab over Kurd and town over tribe and crown over clergy, did not fuse into a people; it set as the permanent seam of the state, and everything that follows in this study is in some measure a reading of what it cost to govern a country whose apex was borrowed and whose unity was merely asserted. The second confirmation is that the settlement's fictions are the series' familiar pair in Arab dress: the petition-form, in which the ruled are made to have chosen what the ruler chose for them — ninety-six per cent for a king picked in Cairo — and the definition-form, in which the taking is redefined into something the ruled can swallow, the mandate re-inscribed as a treaty of alliance with the control untouched beneath the new word. Name the fiction as fiction: the plebiscite ratified a decision already taken, and the alliance was the mandate wearing a name the country could stand to say.

And the case leaves one thing waiting. The whole arrangement was assembled under a robe this series has not met before — the mandate, the League's new trusteeship, the first robe in the collection to promise, in writing, its own expiry. What that robe was for, whom it faced, and why an order would ever choose to dress itself in a garment that named the date of its own undressing, is the next thing to read.

A note on sources. The Cairo Conference of March 1921 (its participants, Churchill's "Forty Thieves," the pre-decision in London, and the informing of the two Iraqi representatives on 14 March) follows the standard record and scholarship. Faisal's descent and career — the Hashemite lineage, the leadership of the Arab Revolt, the kingship of Syria from March 1920 and the expulsion by the French at Maysalun in July 1920, and his lack of any Iraqi base — are from the standard record. The British reasoning for choosing him (credentials broad enough for appeal, a position weak enough to ensure dependence) is paraphrased from the scholarship. The plebiscite returning ninety-six per cent and the means by which it was secured, the deportation of Sayyid Talib, and Gertrude Bell's letter of March 1921 ("to square the Naqib and to convince Saiyid Talib... that his hopes are doomed to disappointment," quoted from the reproduced Bell archive) are from the record; the coronation of 23 August 1921 and the playing of "God Save the King" for want of an Iraqi anthem are from the standard accounts. The Sharifian officers as the Sunni ex-Ottoman backbone of the regime (with Nuri al-Said as the exemplar), and the reproduction of Sunni command over Shia rank and file in the new army, follow the standard scholarship (and the summaries in the standard reference works). The empowerment of the tribal shaykhs as landlords through the Tribal Disputes Regulations, and the binding of tenants under the Peasants' Rights and Duties Act of 1933, are from the record. The recasting of the mandate as the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922 (a treaty of alliance preserving British "advice" and "advisers" across eighteen departments) is from the standard record. Modern scholarship (Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Hanna Batatu; Ali Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq*; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*) is paraphrased and credited; contested figures are given as ranges or as the record states them. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.

ABLE TO STAND ALONE

Module 3 · The Robe — the mandate, trusteeship written for the first time into international law and fitted with an auditor at Geneva and, alone among the robes in this collection, an expiry: a "sacred trust of civilisation" over peoples "not yet able to stand by themselves," their independence promised "until such time as they are able to stand alone" — the first robe built with a fuse, and the art of wearing it the art of granting the form of the promised ending while keeping the substance

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The robe that named its own ending

Every robe this series has read until now was built to last for ever. The civilising of the enslaved, the sacred trust of the scramble, the paramountcy of the African trusteeship — each faced a horizon with no end in it, a tutelage that would simply continue, the guardian's authority renewing itself indefinitely because the ward was never quite ready to be released. The mandate is the first robe in the collection to write its own expiry into its own text, and that single difference is the whole of the module. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the founding charter of the whole system, laid down that the well-being of "peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world" formed "*a sacred trust of civilisation*," that the tutelage of such peoples should be exercised by advanced nations "*as Mandatories on behalf of the League*" — and then, for the class of mandates into which Iraq fell, the former Ottoman lands, it added the clause that makes this robe unlike any before it. Certain communities of the old Turkish Empire, it said, "have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory *until such time as they are able to stand alone*."

Read that last clause slowly, because the series exists to read clauses like it slowly. It is a robe that promises the ruled their freedom and then defers it to a date the guardian will name. The promise is real — this is not the scramble, where the trust was frankly endless; on its face the tutelage is temporary, a scaffold to be struck once the building stands. And the promise is a leash — because "until such time as they are able to stand alone" reserves the judgment of readiness to the very power that profits from finding the ward not yet ready, so that the same sentence that grants the freedom also hands the guardian the authority to postpone it. A robe with a fuse, and the fuse in the guardian's own hand. What it means to wear such a garment — to run an order under a trust that has promised, in writing and before an international audience, to dissolve itself — is what this module unfolds.

The world that made the word unsayable

Why this robe, and why now? The trusteeship idea in it was not new. It ran back through decades of the civilising mission — through the scramble's "sacred trust of civilisation," through the Berlin Act's stated concern for "the well-being of the native populations" of the Congo basin — an unbroken lineage of robes in which the conqueror described his conquest as a duty discharged on the conquered's behalf. What was new in 1919 was not the doctrine but the audience. The Great War had bankrupted and discredited the old empires; the American president had made the self-determination of peoples the announced principle of the peace; and the new League of Nations was, as the historians put it, the very agent of the transition from a world of formal empires to a world of formally sovereign states. In that world Britain could not do with Mesopotamia what it had done with a hundred territories in the century before and simply annex it. It had to hold the country as a trust, on behalf of the League, directed toward the ward's eventual independence — because annexation, the plain old word for taking and keeping, had become unsayable. The mandate is not a break from empire. It is what empire wears in a world that has outlawed the word for it: the trusteeship robe's most sophisticated descendant, promoted from a metropolitan self-justification into an article of international law, and fitted, for the first time, with an auditor and a fuse.

The auditor at Geneva

The auditor was the second novelty, and Article 22 created it in the same breath: *"A permanent Commission shall be constituted to receive and examine the annual reports of the Mandatories and to advise the Council on all matters relating to the observance of the mandates."* The Permanent Mandates Commission, seated at Geneva from December 1920, was the first standing international body in history to which an empire was formally required to account for the conduct of its rule. Each year the mandatory submitted a written report on its administration and sent an official to sit at the Commission's table and answer its members' questions; and the ruled could petition the Commission directly over the mandatory's head. It was, on paper, an extraordinary thing — imperial administration placed under external review — and it established, in practice, at least one hard limit, that a mandate could not simply be annexed.

But the exact nature of its power has to be fixed precisely, because it is the power of a robe and not of a floor. The Commission, composed though it was largely of men drawn from the imperial and foreign-policy establishments of Europe, could question, could criticise in its reports, could embarrass — and it could do nothing else. It had no power to enforce its recommendations, no sanction, no capacity to compel a mandatory to do anything at all. Its whole leverage was reputational: the annual report, the pointed question, the observation communicated to the Council and thence to the world. And this means that the mandatory's task with respect to Geneva was never obedience. It was the management of the report — to keep the trusteeship story creditable before the Commission while governing as it found convenient on the ground. The robe faced Geneva, and the great labour of wearing it was the labour of ensuring that what Geneva was shown and what the ward actually lived did not visibly diverge. That labour — the annual account, the handled petition, the distance held open between the auditor's papers and the reserve's experience — is the mandate's characteristic seam, and it has a module of its own further on.

The word for Baghdad, the robe for Geneva

Iraq shows the robe's two-facedness with unusual clarity, because in Iraq the two faces even carried two different names. The settlement had already established that the word "mandate" was unsayable in Baghdad, where nationalist opinion would not accept the plain admission of tutelage, and that Britain therefore governed Iraq not by a mandate but by a treaty of alliance. Yet the robe of Article 22 was not thereby discarded; it was retained, and shown to the other audience. Britain never enacted a formal mandate instrument for Iraq at all. Instead it submitted to the League the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922, a protocol of 1923, and a Council Decision of 1924, as its undertaking to apply — in the exact title of the British papers laid before the League — "the Principles of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations" to Iraq, with the Permanent Mandates Commission auditing the administration throughout. So the same order wore two labels at once, each cut for the eye that would read it: to Baghdad, a treaty between two allied states, no mandate and no tutelage named; to Geneva, the principles of Article 22, the sacred trust, the annual report to the Commission. One garment, two names, and the choice of which to show governed entirely by which audience was looking — which is the audience-facing nature of every robe in this series, here made so literal that the thing had a different word for each direction it faced.

The fuse and the flag

The fuse, once lit, could not be left to burn for ever, and that is the deepest consequence of the whole design. A trust that plainly never intends to end is not a trust but a fraud, and the auditor at Geneva would in time ask the question the robe had invited — when will the ward be able to stand alone? So Britain could not do with Iraq what it had done with older possessions and simply hold it indefinitely. It had, at some point, to discharge the trust it had proclaimed, or be exposed as never having meant it. And in 1932 it did: Iraq became the first mandate anywhere to be terminated, and the first former mandate admitted to the League of Nations as an independent state. But it discharged the trust in the precise manner that a self-liquidating robe is built to permit — by granting the form of the promised independence while retaining

the substance of control. The flag rose and the League seat was taken; and underneath them the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 kept the British air bases at Habbaniyah and near Basra, kept the right to move British troops across the country, kept the oil, and kept the "consultation" on foreign policy that was a veto by another name — while the League, discharging its own trusteeship, required Iraq to guarantee the rights of its minorities as the price of the mandate's end. The fuse did not blow the order up. It converted the order: from occupation into alliance, from colony into client, from mandate into treaty — the same control, re-dressed for a world that would no longer say "empire." The self-liquidating robe does not free the ward. It invents flag-independence, and Iraq, the first mandate to reach its expiry, is where the template was cut. The full account of that ending belongs to a later module; what matters here is that the fuse was in the robe from the first day, and that everything the mandate did was shaped, from the beginning, by the ending it had already promised.

Reading the robe against the framework

The case returns one substantial refinement to the framework and confirms two of the series' standing findings.

The refinement is the self-liquidating robe, and it is the study's central contribution to the theory of the robe. Every robe the collection has read before this one was built to be maintained on a horizon with no end; the mandate is the first built to be maintained toward an ending it has itself named. That difference reorganises the whole economy of the robe's upkeep. An indefinite robe must be kept believed for ever, and its danger is exposure of the permanence of the control. A self-liquidating robe must be kept believed toward its own promised expiry, and its danger is the opposite — exposure of the fact that the guardian never means to leave. So the management task shifts from hiding permanence to managing a gap: the gap between the nominal independence the robe has promised and the auditor now tracks, and the substantive control the metropole intends to keep. And the only solution that closes the gap is flag-independence — grant the form (the crown, the flag, the seat at Geneva, the treaty of alliance) and retain the substance (the bases, the oil,

the advisers, the veto). The self-liquidating robe is thus the birth certificate of the twentieth century's characteristic imperial form, the client state that is sovereign on paper and directed in fact, and Iraq in 1932 is its first working instance. The robe that promised to dissolve itself did dissolve — into a treaty that changed the letterhead and kept the power.

The two confirmations follow. The robe faces the audience whose belief the order requires, and the mandate is the case in which that audience hardened into an institution: the Permanent Mandates Commission is the robe's addressee given a building, a letterhead, and an annual meeting, and the mandatory's characteristic labour toward it is not obedience — the Commission could not compel — but the maintenance of a creditable report. That the robe now faced a standing auditor rather than a diffuse public did not change what a robe is; it only sharpened the seam between what the auditor was shown and what the ward lived into the order's central and continuing task. And the mandate is the trusteeship robe's most sophisticated form and not a departure from it: the civilising lineage runs unbroken from the Berlin Act to Article 22, and what changed was only the audience — a post-war world that had made annexation unsayable and demanded that the trust, at least on paper, be temporary — so that the robe adapted by acquiring the auditor to satisfy and the fuse to promise. Name the fiction as fiction: a "sacred trust of civilisation" exercised over peoples adjudged "not yet able to stand by themselves" is the oldest self-description of empire fitted to a world that would no longer license the word, and the promise to end it "when they are able to stand alone" is a promise whose date the promiser kept in his own keeping.

And the case leaves the next module its work. Because the robe had promised to make the ward *able to stand alone*, the mandatory had now to be seen building the things a nation stands on — the schools, the army, the administration, the visible institutions whose growth would prove to Geneva that the trust was being discharged. But to build a nation out of the three fractured provinces the settlement had welded together meant choosing whose nation it would be; and the formation that Britain and its Sharifian client actually built — Arab, Sunni-led, nationalist in a single official key — was cut to the measure of the minority that held the state, and against the majority and

the Kurds whom the trust was ostensibly readying to stand. What that formation made, and what it refused to make, is the next thing to read.

A note on sources. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations is quoted exactly — the "sacred trust of civilisation," the "peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world," the tutelage "exercised... as Mandatories on behalf of the League," the Class A provision that the former Ottoman communities' "existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone," and the constitution of "a permanent Commission... to receive and examine the annual reports of the Mandatories" — from the Covenant text as reproduced by the Avalon Project (Yale Law School), the United Nations, and the United States State Department's records of the Paris Peace Conference. The Permanent Mandates Commission (established at Geneva in December 1920; its annual-report and petition procedure; its membership drawn largely from imperial and foreign-policy establishments; and its lack of any power to enforce) follows the standard record and the Commission's own published minutes. Iraq's particular arrangement — the absence of a formal mandate instrument and the substitution of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922, the Protocol of 1923, and the League Council Decision of 1924 as Britain's undertaking to apply "the Principles of Article 22" to Iraq — is from the League and United States State Department documents of the period. The termination of the mandate in 1932 on condition of minority guarantees, and the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, are established here in outline and rendered fully in a later module. The continuity of the trusteeship idea from the Berlin Act to Article 22, and the character of the Commission, follow the standard scholarship (notably Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*), paraphrased and credited. Contested points are noted as such. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.

IN THAT CASE WE CANNOT APPOINT YOU

Module 4 · Formation — because the robe had promised to make the ward a nation "able to stand alone," a nation had to be manufactured and shown; and the man brought from Damascus to manufacture it built a single official identity — Arab, secular, language-based, cut to the measure of the Sunni minority that held the state — that had no room for the Kurds who were not Arabs and only suspicion for the Shia majority who were, so that the formation meant to close the fracture instead handed it an ideology

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

The nation that had to be shown

The self-liquidating robe created a demand that none of the earlier robes in this series ever made. Because the mandate had promised, in writing and before an auditor, to make the ward "able to stand alone," the mandatory had now to be seen producing the thing that stands — a nation, with the visible furniture of one: schools teaching a common history, an army wearing a common flag, a population that could be shown to Geneva as a people in the making rather than three provinces held down from the air. But there was no Iraqi nation to be shown growing. There was a Shia majority, a Sunni-minority state, a Kurdish north that wished to leave, and a set of provinces that had never been one country. So the nation had to be manufactured, as the king and the plebiscite and the anthem had been manufactured before it — and here the manufacture ran into a problem the settlement had been able to paper over and formation could not. To manufacture a nation you must decide what the nation is. There is no neutral national identity lying about for a fractured land to adopt; every national story is told in some particular language, out of some

particular past, and the choosing of the language and the past is the choosing of who belongs and who does not. This module is about the identity Iraq's formation chose, and about the people it thereby placed outside the nation it was building.

The teacher brought from Damascus

The man who chose it was, like the king he served, imported. Sati' al-Husri was a Syrian by origin, born in Yemen to an Aleppo family of Ottoman officials, schooled not in a madrasa but at the imperial college of administration in Constantinople, fluent in Turkish and French before he took up the cause of Arabic; a man who had begun as a loyal Ottomanist and turned to Arabism only as the empire died. He had run education for Faisal's short-lived kingdom in Syria, and when the French threw Faisal out he followed his king to Iraq, and there, from 1921 to 1927, he was Director of General Education, and after that the head of the Higher Teachers' Training College until 1937. The maker of the Iraqi nation was as foreign to Iraq as its monarch, and he built with imported hands: he induced more than a hundred teachers to come from Syria and Palestine to staff the new schools and teach Arab history and Arab letters. His conception of the nation was borrowed from German romanticism, the doctrine that a nation is a people bound by a shared language and a shared history — and since the Arabs shared Arabic, they were one nation, and the school's whole task was to make the Arabic tongue and the Arab past into the child's own identity. He wrote the reading primer that would teach Arabic to Iraqi schoolchildren for the better part of a century, and he built a curriculum of Arab history and Arab literature and Arab geography whose purpose, in a scholar's summary, was to fix in the coming political and military elite a permanent commitment to a strong and integrated Iraq destined one day to lead the whole Arab world. He was not, in truth, building an Iraqi identity at all. He was building an Arab one, with Iraq cast as its vanguard.

The line the formation drew

An identity built on being Arab has an edge, and the edge is the heart of the module, and there is a single small episode that shows the edge more plainly

than any argument could. Some time around 1926 the Ministry of Education sent al-Husri a young man to be appointed a teacher: Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, a poet of great gifts, born in Najaf into one of the eminent Shia clerical families of that holy city — his grandfather had been a celebrated grand mujtahid — a man who had marched in the revolt of 1920 and who had lately written some verses in praise of the landscapes of Iran. Al-Husri interviewed him, and the exchange, as it has come down to us through the memoir literature, is the entire logic of the formation compressed into three lines:

"First, I want to know your nationality."

"I am an Iranian."

"In that case we cannot appoint you."

Al-Husri moved to bar him as "anti-national"; he would in time write a tract entitled "Iranian Teachers Who Caused Us Arabs Big Problems," and he campaigned against schools he judged too warm toward Persia. The head of Iraqi education had told a Najafi poet — an Iraqi from the Shia holy city, a veteran of the national revolt — that he could not be permitted to teach Iraqi children, because his nationality, his Arabness, was in question. That is what the Arab-nationalist formation did to the Shia. It made their belonging a question. To be a full Iraqi was to be an Arab, and the Shia — whose faith turned toward Persian co-religionists, whose great clerics were often Persian by birth, whose entire confessional world the secular-Arab nation had no means to absorb — were held under a standing suspicion of being not-quite-Arab and therefore not-quite-Iraqi, half-Persian in their loyalties whatever their birth. The king himself was uneasy with this; Faisal wanted the Shia brought into the state and disliked al-Husri's sectarian edge, and he rescued al-Jawahiri by taking him into the royal court. But the formation had its own momentum and its own key, and it ran against the majority even against the wish of the very king the mandate had installed to hold the country together.

The majority outside the school, the mountains outside the nation

The formation thus produced two populations it could not incorporate, and each kept or built a formation of its own.

The Shia were the majority, and the Arab-nationalist school placed them under suspicion at the same moment that the inherited past placed them at a disadvantage. Four centuries of Sunni-Ottoman rule had left the Shia with little of the administrative and educational and military experience that the new state ran on — they had been shut out of the old order and now entered the new one from far behind — and the Arab-nationalist temper of the state schools, which treated their confessional identity as a mark of divided loyalty, gave them little reason to enter those schools at all. A few Shia notables were given ministries — Jafar Abu al-Timman took commerce, a tribal figure took education for a time — but these were gestures against a structural imbalance that held. And the Shia already possessed a formation older and deeper than anything the state could offer: the *hawza*, the great seminaries of Najaf and Karbala, and the *marja'iyya* that governed them, a religious education and a religious identity a thousand years in the making that the secular-Arab state school could neither absorb nor replace, and that went on forming the Shia majority entirely outside the state's reach. In another colony this series watched a state withhold formation from the majority and the majority build its own schools to seize it; here the state offered the majority a formation cut in a key they could not share, and the majority simply kept the formation they had always had. The outcome was the same in the way that matters most: a majority whose belief was shaped by something the state did not control. And when the exclusion turned from the classroom to the ballot — when the elections of 1934 shut the Shia tribal *shaykhs* of the mid-Euphrates out of the parliament — the mid-Euphrates rose, in 1935 and 1936, Shia tribes against the Sunni-led state, and the army put them down by force, as another army had put down the same country in 1920.

For the Kurds the Arab-nationalist formation had no place at all, because they were not Arabs. A nation defined by the Arabic language and the Arab past can make a Kurdish-speaking people with its own tongue and its own history only two offers — assimilate, or stand outside — and the Kurds accepted neither. *Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji's* risings through the 1920s and into 1932 were fought against the very inclusion of the Kurdish north in an Arab Iraq; the Kurds pressed for their own language in their own schools and their own administration; and when the League terminated the mandate in 1932 it required Iraq to guarantee the Kurds' linguistic and cultural rights —

guarantees the Arab state would keep mostly in the breach. The formation that was built to make one nation could not so much as offer the Kurds a place within the nation it was making, save the single place of ceasing to be Kurds.

Reading formation against the framework

The case returns one refinement to the framework and confirms two of the series' findings.

The refinement is that formation over a manufactured and fractured demos must choose a key, and the key it chooses becomes the fracture. Where a national formation is laid over a people already one, it deepens a unity that is really there. Where it is laid over a people welded out of fragments, there is no neutral key to be had — every national identity is spoken in some particular language and remembered out of some particular past — and the key that is chosen must, by its nature, take in those who share it and shut out those who do not. Iraq's formation was cut in the Arab-nationalist key, and for reasons that were structural before they were ideological: the Sunni Sharifians held the state, Arab nationalism was the one modern ideology of unity available once Ottomanism had died, and the man hired to build the schools was a committed pan-Arabist. But that key had no room for the Kurds, who were not Arabs, and it held only suspicion for the Shia majority, who were Arabs but whose faith and clergy and confessional world the secular-Arab nation could not take in. So the formation meant to close the inherited fracture instead handed it an ideology. It converted the old Ottoman order — a hierarchy of rank and rule, in which the Shia were subordinate subjects but subjects still — into a modern question of national authenticity, in which the Shia and the Kurds were asked whether they belonged to the nation at all. And that is the harder and the less negotiable exclusion, because a man can be a subordinate member of a state and still be a member of it, while a man whose nationality is put in doubt has been told he is not a member at all.

The two confirmations follow. The first is that the demand for a demonstrable nation came from the robe. Because the mandate had promised to make the ward "able to stand alone," the mandatory was obliged to exhibit to Geneva a nation in the making — and a nation, to be exhibited, has to be given

a single identity. The robe's promise of expiry therefore forced the choice of a single national key, and on a fractured substrate the only way to manufacture a single visible nation is to define the nation as one of the fragments and to cast the others as deviations from it. The self-liquidating robe did not merely permit an exclusionary formation; it required one, because it required a unitary nation where there was only a fracture. The second confirmation is the recursion. The Arab-nationalist formation was a new build laid over substrates that already carried their own fully-taken formations — a Shia religious identity a thousand years deep, a Kurdish ethnic identity older than any Arab state — and a new formation laid over old ones that have taken does not erase them; it meets them. It took only with the minority that authored it and the officers it trained, whose devotion to it would within a decade drive the coups and the pan-Arab adventures that the schoolrooms had seeded. Where it met the Shia's ancient formation it could not absorb it, and the hawza went on forming the majority beyond the state's reach. Where it met the Kurds' it could only attempt to erase it, and produced Kurdish nationalism in the attempt. The state's formation was the newcomer on this ground, and with the majority of the ground it never took — which is why the floor of the previous module could never be retired, and why the cost of holding an unbelieving country falls due in the module that comes next.

A note on sources. Sati' al-Husri's origins and career (his Syrian-Aleppan family, his birth in Yemen and schooling in Constantinople, his conversion from Ottomanism to Arabism, his direction of education in Faisal's Syria and then in Iraq from 1921 to 1927, his headship of the Higher Teachers' Training College, his importation of teachers from Syria and Palestine, his German-romantic language-nationalism, and his reading primer) follow the standard record and the standard biography (William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' al-Husri*); the characterisation of his chief accomplishment is Malik Mufti's, paraphrased. The al-Jawahiri affair — al-Jawahiri's Najafi Shia clerical origin, his verses on Iran, al-Husri's move to bar him, and the interview exchange ("First, I want to know your nationality... In that case we cannot appoint you") — is quoted as it is reproduced in the memoir and scholarly literature (notably Kanan Makiya, writing as Samir al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear*), and is presented as it has come down through that account; al-Husri's tract on "Iranian Teachers" and Faisal's intervention to appoint al-Jawahiri to the court are from the record.

*The structural exclusion of the Shia (their inheritance of Ottoman disadvantage, the limited ministerial appointments, the hawza of Najaf and Karbala as their own formation) and the 1935–36 Shia revolts of the mid-Euphrates follow the standard scholarship (Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Hanna Batatu). The Kurdish exclusion — the risings of Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji through the 1920s to 1932, and the League's minority guarantees of 1932 — is from the standard record. Modern scholarship (Cleveland; Nakash; Tripp; Reeva Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars*; Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*) is paraphrased and credited; contested points are noted as such. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.*

FORBIDDEN TO LEAVE THE LAND

Module 5 · The Cost Column — why the ordinary subject complied when the belief on offer was one the majority did not share: an order too cheap to garrison him and too unbelieved to trust him, holding him instead through a manufactured landlord who bound him to the soil by debt and a court, behind the landlord a minority under arms that would fire on the majority, and behind them a reach from the air that could destroy any village that rose — a full cost column held not by density but by delegation

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

Why he did not rise

For the ordinary subject the ledger comes out against revolt in one of two ways: because he believes the order rightful and enforces it on himself, or because a credible enforcer can reach him and he has no exit, so that compliance is simply the least bad move on a board where every other has been closed. Iraq's majority did not believe. The formation of the previous module took only with the minority that authored it; the Shia peasant of the Euphrates and the Kurdish villager of the mountains held no conviction that the Arab-nationalist state set over them was rightful, and so the entire weight of holding them fell, as it did in another unbelieved colony, on the cost column. But the cost column Iraq built to bear that weight was of a different construction from the one this series has examined before, and the difference is the module. Iraq did not — could not — reach every subject directly. The whole design of the order was that it be cheap; the revolt of 1920 had priced direct rule out of the question, and there was to be no register at every throat, no British constable in every district, no dense apparatus binding each individual to the state by an

instrument he carried on his body. Instead the cost column was delegated and reach-based: the subject was held day to day by manufactured intermediaries, and the whole was backed by a destructive reach applied on demand to any collective that rose. Two tiers, and a proxy, and behind them the bombers.

The landlord made to hold the peasant

The base tier held the peasant, and most Iraqis were peasants. The settlement had already converted the tribal shaykh from a leader of his people into a proprietor over them, and it is worth seeing the full machinery assembled, because assembled it is the floor of the whole rural order. The land settlement registered the communal land of the tribe in the shaykh's own name, so that ground which had been the tribe's in common became the shaykh's private estate and the tribesmen became his tenants. The Tribal Disputes Regulations gave the shaykh the powers of a court over those tenants, so that he was not only their landlord but their judge. And the Peasants' Rights and Duties Act of 1933, codifying what the mandate years had built, forbade a tenant to leave the land until every debt to his landlord had been settled.

Read what that did to the ordinary man, because it closed his exits one by one. The soil beneath him was now his shaykh's property, so he could not feed himself independently of the shaykh. His shaykh was his judge, so he could not resist him at law. And he was, by statute, forbidden to leave — and since the tenant kept no accounts and the landlord kept them all, the tenant was perpetually in debt, so that the debt was a chain and the statute was its lock. The peasant was bound to the soil, to a man the British had made his owner, by a machinery the British had drawn. This is the base of the cost column, and its striking feature is what is absent from it: the state does not appear. It does not reach the peasant, watch the peasant, or tax the peasant directly. It reaches the shaykh; the shaykh holds the peasant; and the peasant is held by a landlord's debt and a landlord's court, both of them conferred by a power he will never see.

The reach behind the landlord

What, then, held the shaykh? Two things, one pulling each way. His land grant and his judicial power were the state's to give and the state's to take away, so his interest bound him upward to the order exactly as the peasant's debt bound him downward to the shaykh. And behind that interest stood the reach this study has already described. The Royal Air Force could not reach the individual peasant day to day, and did not try; what it could do was destroy any village or tribe that rose, from the air, within the hour, from a direction the risen could not answer. So the shaykh kept his tribe quiet in the knowledge that a tribe which did not stay quiet was bombed, and everyone had seen it done — in 1920, and again on the Shia mid-Euphrates in the risings of 1935 and 1936, and on the Kurds of the north. The reach did not need to be everywhere at once. It needed only to be credible and to be demonstrated from time to time, and each demonstration — the burned village, the strafed encampment, the delayed-action bomb in the rubble — refixed the price of collective revolt in every subsequent calculation. The upper tier of the cost column was thus not density but reach: a handful of squadrons holding a large and unbelieving country by the certainty that any visible resistance would call down destruction that could not be resisted.

The proxy under arms

The close work on the ground — the guarding of the airfields and the pinning of a rising until the aircraft came — was done by a force recruited on a principle that is a distinct instrument of the cheap floor and deserves to be named as one. The armed force the British raised and paid in Iraq, the Iraq Levies, was drawn not from the Arab majority it policed but overwhelmingly from the Assyrians — a vulnerable Christian minority of the northern mountains — together with some Kurds and Turkmen. Its principal duty, in the plain words of the parliamentary record, was to guard the British aerodromes; and it was used to put down the majority's risings, the revolt of 1920 and the Kurdish insurrections, with a reliability no force drawn from the majority could have been trusted to show. The logic is exact and old. A coercive force recruited from a threatened minority whose survival depends on the ruler, and which has no

share whatever in the majority's grievance, will fire on the majority without hesitation, because its safety lies with the power above it and never with the people around it. The Assyrians were paid better than the Iraqi army, kept under British officers with promotion capped at the junior ranks, and known to every Iraqi as a British proxy — and their reliability was purchased at a price the minority itself would be made to pay in full the day the ruler withdrew. When the mandate ended and the British protection went with it, the majority's stored hatred of the proxy fell upon the proxy, and the cost of the minority floor came due on the Assyrians in the first year of the independent state — a reckoning that has a module of its own further on.

The trap

Why, then, did the ordinary Iraqi's ledger not come out for revolt? Because every exit had been closed, and closed cheaply, through others. He could not subsist off the land, because the land was his shaykh's. He could not leave the land, because his debt and the statute forbade it. He could not resist his shaykh, because his shaykh was his judge. He could not prevail at the ballot, because he was shut out of it. And if his tribe rose as one, the aircraft came. The belief the state offered he did not hold, so nothing in the benefit column drew him to stay; there was only the cost column, and the cost column was full — but full by delegation, held by a landlord and a proxy and a reach, at a small fraction of what it would have cost to hold him with British hands. That is the particular trap of a cheap unbelieved order: not a wall the ruler builds and mans himself, but a set of manufactured intermediaries, each fastened to the ruler by an interest the ruler conferred, standing between the ruler and the ruled and doing the holding on his behalf.

Reading the cost column against the framework

The case returns one refinement to the framework and banks a second finding that a later module will collect.

The refinement is that a cost column can be held full in two quite different ways, and which way an order chooses reveals its economy. It can be held by density — reaching every subject directly, a little, all the time, watching and

binding each individual, the register at the throat and the constable in the district — which is expensive, and is what an unbelieved order builds when it can afford to. Or it can be held by delegated depth — reaching no subject directly at all, but holding the intermediaries who hold everyone, and backing them with a destructive reach applied on demand to whatever collective rises — which is cheap, and is what an unbelieved order builds when it cannot afford density. Iraq is the delegated-depth model, and the austerity the 1920 revolt forced on the order is what drove it there: the shaykh-landlord holds the peasant, the state holds the shaykh, the RAF holds the whole by the credible promise of destruction, and the imperial outlay is a few squadrons and a minority under arms and a subsidy to the shaykhs. The delegated cost column costs a fraction of the dense one. But it is markedly more brittle, because it rests on three conditions the dense column does not require — the intermediaries staying bought, the reach staying credible, and the proxy staying loyal — and each of these can fail, and when one fails the floor does not wear away at the edges but gives way all at once, which is why an order of this kind lurches between long quiet and sudden general revolt rather than declining by degrees.

And the delegated cost column reads, beyond the missing belief, the manufactured nature of the whole order. An organic order holds the ruled through authorities the ruled already accept; this order held them through authorities it had itself manufactured — a shaykh it had made a landlord, a minority it had made a proxy — for the plain reason that it possessed no authority the majority accepted and so had to fabricate the intermediaries it delegated to. Delegation to manufactured intermediaries is the signature of an order that is at once unbelieved by its subjects and unwilling to pay to coerce them directly, and it carries a hidden term that a later module will have to settle: the minority proxy is reliable precisely because it is threatened, its whole safety staked on the ruler, and that same dependence marks it as the majority's enemy, so that the day the ruler leaves, the debt for every shot the proxy fired falls due on the proxy alone. The floor Britain built on the Assyrians held the mandate cheaply, and set the terms of the massacre that would open the independent state.

The next question is what such an order extracted, and from where — for an order that holds its majority this cheaply, through a landlord who takes the

peasant's surplus for himself, is not living off the peasant's crop. It is living off something else, in one place in the ground, that needs no peasant at all.

A note on sources. The Iraq Levies — predominantly Assyrian, with some Kurds and Turkmen; officered by the British and the RAF with local promotion capped low; charged principally with guarding the RAF aerodromes; used to suppress the 1920 revolt and the Kurdish risings; paid more than the Iraqi army; widely regarded as a British proxy; and not granted Iraqi citizenship until 1924 — are described from the standard record, the parliamentary record (Hansard, 5 July 1932, on the "Assyrian levies... whose principal duty it is to guard the British aerodromes in Iraq"), and the standard accounts (including R. S. Stafford's contemporary account and the modern scholarship). The tribal-land machinery — the land settlement registering communal tribal land in the shaykhs' names, the Tribal Disputes Regulations conferring judicial powers on the shaykhs, and the Peasants' Rights and Duties Act of 1933 forbidding a tenant to leave the land until his debts to the landlord were settled — is from the standard record. Air control and the periodic bombing of rebellious tribes (the 1920 revolt; the 1935–36 mid-Euphrates Shia revolts; the Kurdish risings) are established in an earlier module and follow the standard scholarship. The deferred cost of the minority-proxy floor — the 1933 Simele massacre of the Assyrians — is noted here in outline and rendered in a later module. Modern scholarship (Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*) is paraphrased and credited; contested figures are given as ranges. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.

MR FIVE PER CENT

Module 6 · Extraction — the wealth the order was built to take lay not in the people's labour or the people's land but at a single point in the ground, drawn out by a concession to a company owned by everyone but Iraq — down to a private dealmaker in Europe who held five per cent and became for years the richest man alive — while Iraq received a rent per ton; a third fork of extraction, the point-resource, that needs no peasant, draws the state's border to its own edge, and funds the cheap floor that holds the people off it

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

The thing the whole order was for

Extraction is not one module among the twelve in this study; it is the reason for the other eleven. The landscape said it plainly: Britain came to Mesopotamia for the road to India and stayed for the oil. The imported king, the cheap floor held from the air, the nation welded out of three provinces, the delegated cost column of landlords and proxies — the whole apparatus this study has been counting was built to do one thing, which was to hold, cheaply and quietly, the ground that holds the oil, so that the oil could be taken out. So this module is in a sense the hinge of the whole: what was actually extracted, from where, and into whose hands. And the answer turns out to reorganise everything the study has already described, because the wealth of Iraq was of a kind that the series has not extracted before, and its nature changes the order's entire relationship to the people it ruled.

The point in the ground

The wealth was oil, and oil is not like the wealth this series has taken in its earlier cases. It is not a flow drawn off the people's labour, a harvest or a rent

that presupposes a productive population to be taxed. It is not a stock of the people's land, a fertile countryside to be seized and settled. It is a point-resource: concentrated at a few places in the ground, drawn out by a small and specialised operation, and requiring almost no mass of subjects at all. The character of the thing showed itself the morning it was struck. At three o'clock on 14 October 1927, at an exploratory well called Baba Gurgur just north of Kirkuk, the drill passed fifteen hundred feet and hit oil under enormous pressure; crude blew out of control up the bore, flooding the wadi and throwing up a cloud of gas that asphyxiated several of the crew, and it ran for nine days at something near ninety-five thousand barrels a day before it could be capped. The Kurds of the district had a name for the ancient natural gas flares nearby — Baba Gurgur, the Father of Eternal Fire. And the human scale of the operation that tapped this enormous thing is the first and deepest fact about a point-resource: to drill and hold it took some fifty British company men directing about two and a half thousand Iraqi labourers, with the skilled drillers brought from California. A few thousand men, foreign-directed, to draw out a wealth greater than the labour of the entire population of the country. The oil needed almost no Iraqis. It was de-linked, from the very first, from the people over whom the whole order stood.

Owned by everyone but Iraq

The company that drew it out was called, despite everything, the Turkish Petroleum Company — a name that had no Turkish participation behind it and, once it operated Iraq's oil, nothing Iraqi either. When the post-war carve-up of shares was finished, its owners were the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which was British and controlled directly by the British government; Royal Dutch Shell, which was Anglo-Dutch; the Compagnie Française des Pétroles, which had been created by the French state expressly to hold France's share; and a syndicate of American majors led by Standard Oil of New Jersey — each of these four holding just under a quarter — and, with the last five per cent and no vote at all, a private Armenian dealmaker named Calouste Gulbenkian, whom the world called Mr Five Per Cent and who was, on the strength of that sliver, for many years the wealthiest individual on earth. Iraq's oil was owned by Britain, the Netherlands, France, the United States, and one private man in

Europe; and it was not owned by Iraq. The formula on paper was that Iraq "had ownership of its own oil," but what Iraq actually received under the seventy-five-year concession its government signed in March 1925 was a royalty — a fixed sum per ton lifted — which is to say a rent. The nation was paid a rent on its own principal wealth, and everyone but the nation took the oil and the profit that came of selling it.

The lines the oil drew

Two lines were drawn across the map in these years, and both of them were drawn by the oil rather than by the people who lived under them.

The first was the northern border of Iraq itself, and it was drawn to capture the field. The Mosul vilayet, in whose ground the oil lay, had been promised to France under the wartime Sykes–Picot partition; Britain, wanting the oil for itself, induced France after the war to give Mosul up to the British zone in exchange for a quarter-share in the oil company. Then the new Turkish Republic laid claim to Mosul as part of its national territory, and the dispute went before the League of Nations, which in December 1925 awarded the province to Iraq — a settlement confirmed by the Ankara agreement of June 1926, under which Turkey relinquished the land in return for ten per cent of the oil royalties for twenty-five years. The whole quarrel was about the oil and admitted as much on every side: the Turkish leader himself said Mosul mattered because it held oil reserves worth wealth, and Turkey in the end sold the territory for a cut of the royalties. But mark whom the line, once drawn, enclosed. Mosul was Kurdish, and the Kurds had been promised self-determination in the first post-war settlement — a promise the oil erased, because their mountains sat over the field, and a field cannot be held without the ground it lies in. So the Kurds were welded into an Arab Iraq they had never wished to join, by a border drawn to reach their oil, and were then, as an earlier module showed, denied any place in the nation that border had made. The manufactured demos of the settlement was here completed by geology: the nation would be composed of whoever happened to live over the oil, or along the road it would travel to the sea.

The second line was drawn on a map of the entire former Ottoman world, and it was drawn in red. In 1928 the partners of the company agreed among themselves that within a red line encircling the old Ottoman lands — the line, by the enduring story, sketched by Gulbenkian's own hand — none of them would seek oil except jointly, through the company, so that competition among them was forbidden and the whole region's petroleum was carved into a single cartel of imperial majors. The company was renamed, the next year, the Iraq Petroleum Company, a title one historian calls simply misleading, since it remained owned by everyone except Iraq. Within the red line, Iraq's oil was locked to a bloc of foreign firms who would bring it up at whatever pace suited their interests across the wider world — and since they held cheaper and readier oil elsewhere, that pace was unhurried, the fields opening slowly, so that the great pipeline that carried the crude out of the country, from Kirkuk across the desert to the Mediterranean at Haifa and at Tripoli, completed in 1934, ran the oil straight from the northern ground to the sea and onward to Europe, past the Iraqis, touching almost none of them on its way out.

Reading extraction against the framework

The case returns to the framework a third fork of extraction and, with it, the deepest structural consequence in the study.

The refinement is that the point-resource is a distinct fork beside the flow and the stock, and it is the one that most completely severs the order from its people. A flow-order taxes the producer and so needs him productive; a stock-order takes the land and so needs the people gone from it but the land worked; a point-resource order takes a rent from a point in the ground and so needs the people neither productive nor gone — only quiet, and off the resource. The state's income is a rent and not a share of the people's work, and that single fact reorganises the whole relation between the order and its population. The people become, to such a state, neither a labour force to be mobilised nor a landed asset to be seized, but an obstacle to be kept still while the rent is drawn. This is why the cost column of the previous module could be held so cheaply and by such delegation: a point-resource order has no plantation to drive its people onto, no harvest it needs them to raise, and so it can afford to hold them

in place, silent and unproductive, at the lowest possible outlay — and the rent pays for the holding. The oil funds the aircraft that keep the people quiet while the oil is taken. Extraction and the cost column close into a single loop: the point-resource pays for the cheap delegated floor whose only task is to hold the population off the point-resource.

Two things follow, and they are the study's sharpest findings on this order. The first is that a point-resource order's border is drawn by the resource, and its demos is an accident of geology. Where a flow-order's frontiers track arable land and a stock-order's track defensible ground, this order's frontiers track the oil: Mosul's field, and not the wishes of Mosul's Kurds, drew the northern line of Iraq and pulled a people into a nation that had no room for them. The manufactured nation of the settlement is here finished by the subsoil, its membership decided by what lies beneath the ground. The second is that the concession is the extractive fiction of the point-resource, and the rent it pays makes a particular kind of state. The concession dresses the taking of a nation's principal wealth by foreign companies as a commercial lease, freely granted by a sovereign for a fair return — when in fact the resource had been divided among the imperial powers before the nation it belonged to had been assembled, and the nation was handed a per-ton rent while the owners kept the oil. And a state that lives on such a rent rather than on taxing its people is a state set loose from its people: it does not need their taxes, and therefore it need not seek their consent, and it becomes itself the prize, since whoever holds the state holds the rent. The point-resource thus seeds, at the very founding, the pathologies the rest of the century would make familiar in this part of the world — the coercive state floating free above the society it rules, the politics that is a contest to seize the rent rather than a compact to share a burden, the coup as the ordinary means of changing hands. Oil de-links the state from the people, funds the floor that holds the people off the oil, and turns the state into a thing to be captured. That the whole elaborate order this study has counted — the imported king, the sacred trust, the welded nation, the landlords and the bombers — was built and maintained to hold the ground that holds the oil is the plainest fact about British Iraq, and, being the plainest, the one its own robe was most concerned that no one should say.

A note on sources. The Turkish Petroleum Company — its founding in 1912 to exploit Mesopotamian oil, its lack of Turkish participation, the pre-war Ottoman concession of 1914, and its post-war ownership (the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Royal Dutch Shell, the Compagnie Française des Pétroles, and the American Near East Development group at roughly 23.75 per cent each, with Calouste Gulbenkian's 5 per cent) — follows the standard record and the oil histories (Daniel Yergin, *The Prize*; Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire*). The seventy-five-year concession signed on 14 March 1925 over the Mosul and Baghdad provinces, the royalty paid to Iraq as a fixed sum per ton, and the exclusion of Basra province are from the record (the concession text). Gulbenkian's role and nickname, and his part in securing Mosul for the Iraqi side of the border, are from the standard accounts. The Mosul question — the wartime allocation to France, the post-war transfer to the British zone in exchange for a French share, the League of Nations award of December 1925, the Ankara agreement of June 1926 (with ten per cent of royalties to Turkey for twenty-five years), and the overriding of the Kurds' earlier promise of self-determination — follows the standard record. Baba Gurgur (struck 14 October 1927, roughly ninety-five thousand barrels a day, several of the crew killed, the small foreign-directed workforce) and the Kirkuk–Haifa/Tripoli pipeline (completed 1934) are from the record and the oil histories. The Red Line Agreement of 1928 and the renaming to the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1929 are from the standard accounts. The analysis of the rentier state draws on the standard political-economy literature (Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, and the wider scholarship on rentierism), paraphrased and credited; the reserve and production figures are given as the record states them and as approximate. Modern scholarship (Yergin; Kent; Hanna Batatu; Charles Tripp; Peter Sluglett) is paraphrased and credited; contested figures are given as ranges. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.

NOTHING COULD BE DONE

Module 7 · Information and Suppression — the seam of a mandate runs not between the metropole and the colony but between the mandatory and the auditor at Geneva, and it works not by burning the record but by publishing a curated one: an annual report that dressed the bombing as policing and the unready ward as ripe for freedom, a petition channel that gave the ruled a voice but no power, and a termination timed so that the auditor's authority lapsed at the exact moment the ruled most needed it

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

The seam that faced Geneva

The seam of a colonial order is the apparatus by which the order manages the belief of the audience whose belief it needs. In an ordinary colony that audience is the metropolitan public and the parliament that funds and mans the enterprise, and the seam runs between the metropole and the colony, keeping the two ends of the story from meeting. The mandate's robe, this study has already shown, faced a different audience — the Permanent Mandates Commission at Geneva, the institutional auditor written into the Covenant, to which the mandatory was obliged each year to render an account. So the mandate's seam ran between the mandatory and the auditor, and its work was to keep the trusteeship creditable in Geneva: to satisfy the annual report, to handle the petitions that came up from the ruled, and to manage the Commission's belief that the sacred trust was being discharged toward the day the ward would stand alone. And because the audience was of a different kind, the seam did its work by a different method than the one this series has watched elsewhere.

The seam that published instead of burning

Another colony in this collection managed its seam, at the last, by fire — it destroyed its record on the way out, because it could not afford to have that record read. The mandate could do nothing of the kind, and the reason is the robe itself. The self-liquidating robe required the mandatory to be read: Article 22 obliged it to submit a detailed annual report to the Commission and to send an accredited man to Geneva to answer the members' questions on it. The mandate could not burn its record; it was compelled, by the terms of its own trusteeship, to publish one. So the seam had to work the other way round — not by hiding what existed but by curating what was published — and the annual report on Iraq became the seam's principal instrument: a thick, public, apparently candid document, and, precisely because it was written to be read by an auditor, written to be managed. The bombing of the Kurdish and tribal country — in a single year the RAF dropped more than nine thousand bombs on the north — was set down in the report as "air control" and "police action," proportionate and humane, warnings given before the strike. The exclusion of the majority from the state was set down as steady administrative progress. The handing of the country's principal wealth to a consortium of foreign companies was set down as economic development. And the ward that the Commission would shortly judge unfit to stand was set down, year upon year, as advancing steadily toward the day it could. This is concealment by publication: the auditor is shown a great deal, and the sheer volume of what he is shown manufactures an impression of transparency, while the mandatory retains complete control of what falls within the frame. The form of the seam is dictated by the form of the robe. An indefinite robe facing a diffuse public can conceal by hiding; a self-liquidating robe facing an institutional auditor that demands an annual report cannot hide, and so it conceals by shaping the report it is required to file.

The voice that had no power

The mandate's charter did give the ruled one thing the earlier colonies never offered: a channel to the auditor over the mandatory's head. Under the Commission's procedure the inhabitants of a mandated territory could petition

Geneva directly, and the Assyrians — the Christian minority Britain had armed as its proxy, who could see the mandate ending and knew with dreadful clarity what its ending would leave them exposed to — used the channel while it was open. In 1931 and 1932 they sent at least five petitions to the Commission, led by their Patriarch, the Mar Shimun, asking to be recognised not as a mere religious minority but as a nation domiciled in Iraq, asking for a homeland or an autonomous district in the north, asking above all for a guarantee of their protection before the British authority that shielded them was withdrawn. The petitions were received, and the Commission was not unmoved; it looked with favour on the idea of a compact and secure settlement for the Assyrians, and thought a League commissioner ought to be sent to examine their grievances on the spot. And out of all of it nothing came, because the petition was a channel that carried the voice of the ruled but none of their power. The British ambassador in Baghdad pressed the Iraqis to keep the notion of an autonomous enclave off the table; the king and his prime minister refused to countenance a League commissioner on their soil; and the Commission, which could recommend and inquire but never command, was left holding a sympathy it had no means to enforce.

Nothing could be done

Then the mandate ended, and its ending was itself the seam's decisive stroke — because the entire force of a petition to the Commission had depended on the mandate's continued existence. While Britain was a mandatory answerable to the League, a petition that succeeded might have produced a resolution of the Council directing Britain to act for the petitioners. The instant the mandate ended, that leverage was gone, for the League had no authority whatever to order a sovereign Iraq to do anything at all. The Assyrians had petitioned before independence precisely because they understood this; they were racing a clock. They lost the race, and they did not lose it by chance. From 1929 onward Britain had been engaged in what a contemporary observer of the law called an unusual spectacle — a great power labouring to convince a skeptical outside body that its dependency was ripe for independence, when every dependency before had been made to fight for its freedom. The Commission was not persuaded. Its members said as much again and again, doubting Iraq's readiness

on its defence and its foreign alliance, on its economic independence, on its administrative capacity, and most insistently on its protection of its minorities; only two of the members ever stated plainly that the moment for ending the mandate had come, and several suggested the whole Commission remained unconvinced. But the Commission could not compel, and Britain wished the mandate ended — because ending it was what converted the mandate into the treaty that kept the airbases and the oil while shedding the auditor — and so ended it was, upon a manufactured case for a readiness the auditor doubted. The Commission formally took up the Assyrian petitions in December 1932, two months after British mandatory authority in Iraq had already lapsed, and its report observed the delicate nature of its task, now, from the constitutional point of view. There was nothing it could do; the petitions were rejected. The seam had done its ultimate work: it had carried the ward across the line of nominal independence before the truth about its readiness could catch the ward up, and once across, the truth was moot, because the only body with the power to act upon it had, at that very moment, ceased to have jurisdiction. What the loss of that jurisdiction cost the Assyrians, in the first year of the independent state, has a module of its own further on. Here it is enough to record that a minority's plea for protection was formally refused two months after the sole authority capable of granting it had lost the power to do so.

Reading information and suppression against the framework

The case returns one refinement to the framework and confirms, in a new key, a finding the series had banked before.

The confirmation first: publication and concealment are a single instrument, set to opposite settings by the circumstances of the audience. One order in this collection burned its record because it could not afford to be read; this order published a curated record because it was required to be read. The requirement to publish did not defeat the seam. It only changed the seam's method from hiding to shaping, from the fire to the frame — and it did so because the form of the seam is dictated by the form of the robe. A robe with no promised end, addressing a public it need never satisfy in detail, can conceal by destruction. A robe that has promised its own end to an auditor who demands an annual

accounting cannot destroy, and so conceals by composition: it writes the record itself, in full, and controls the world's knowledge of the trust by controlling the document through which the trust is known. The thickness of the file is not the opposite of concealment. In a mandate it is the instrument of it.

The refinement is that the petition and the termination together compose a seam peculiar to the self-liquidating robe, and it works by depriving the ruled's voice of power at the exact moment their need is greatest. A petition to an auditor that cannot compel already delivers the appearance of accountability and the substance of none; it is the seam's safety valve, a chamber into which the pressure of grievance is released to do no work. But the self-liquidating robe adds to this a manoeuvre no indefinite robe possesses. Because it has promised an end, and because ending on the mandatory's own terms is the whole object, it manufactures the appearance of the promised outcome — the ward "able to stand alone" — just long enough to trigger the transition, after which the auditor's authority lapses and the truth about the ward can surface without consequence. The plea was refused two months after the power to grant it expired; the catastrophe that proved the plea justified arrived the year after that. The self-liquidating robe does not merely promise an ending. It uses the ending to shed its auditor at the precise instant the auditor would otherwise have been obliged to act — which is why, in the ledger of this order, the manufactured moment of freedom and the abandonment of the vulnerable are not two events but one.

A note on sources. The Permanent Mandates Commission (its constitution under Article 22, its annual-report and petition procedures, its lack of any power to compel, and its composition — "very much an imperialists' club," in Susan Pedersen's phrase) follows the standard record and Pedersen's *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*. The Assyrian petitions of 1931–1932 — the five or more petitions led by the Mar Shimun, Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII; the demands for recognition as a nation and for a homeland or autonomous district; the British steering of the autonomous-enclave question off the table; the Commission's sympathy and its wish to send a commissioner; and the formal rejection of the petitions in December 1932, two months after the mandate's termination, with the Commission noting "the delicate nature of [its] task... from the constitutional point of view" — follow the record (including the Assyrian documentary sources and the League

papers), with "nothing could be done" given as the substance of the Commission's own conclusion rather than as a verbatim quotation. The "unusual spectacle" of Britain arguing to a skeptical Commission that Iraq was "ripe for independence" is from the contemporary legal literature (Quincy Wright and the American Journal of International Law, "The Proposed Termination of the Iraq Mandate"), and the Commission's being "unconvinced as to the readiness of Iraq for independence" from the contemporary account in Foreign Affairs ("Iraq: the End of a Mandate," 1933). The RAF's bombing of the Kurdish north (including the figure of over nine thousand bombs dropped in 1923) and the Kurdish revolts are from the standard record; the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930's silence on minority protection is from the record. The Simele massacre of 1933 is noted here in prospect and rendered in a later module. Modern scholarship (Pedersen; Sarah Shields; Charles Tripp; Peter Sluglett) is paraphrased and credited; contested points are noted as such. Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

VULNERABLE ENOUGH TO REMAIN DEPENDENT

Module 8 · Elite Coordination and the Default — Britain built Iraq on the oldest design there is, a king who confers the spoils and beneficiaries who defend the king because their wealth is his to grant or revoke; but because the king was imported and had no army of his own, his own position pinned him to the sponsor, so that the whole arrangement was engineered to run itself — each man, defending what he had been given, maintaining the apex and the sponsor's control by default — until the beneficiaries the arrangement had formed turned against it, and the floor had to be cashed in to hold the machine the sponsor had only ever appeared to let run alone

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

The oldest design

The arrangement Britain assembled in Iraq was, in its bones, the oldest design there is — the very one that England itself had been built on. A king sits at the apex and confers the spoils: land to the barons, offices to the servants, rank and title to the loyal. And the men who receive the spoils defend the king, not out of love but out of interest, because everything they hold they hold by his grant, and his grant stands only as long as he does. That is the default in its classic form, and it is a genuinely elegant machine, because it needs no supervision. No one has to be commanded to defend the arrangement; each man defends it by defending himself, since the thing that secures his own position is the same thing that secures the whole — the standing of the apex whose decree conferred it. Self-interest and system-maintenance have been welded into a single act. The order runs itself.

The framework's question about any such order is the question of the default: when the arrangement's masters disagree, and no one gives a clear command, whose way does the machine go on its own? And the answer for British Iraq turns entirely on the one feature that set this feudal machine apart from every organic one before it. The king at its apex was not a king of the country. He had been imported.

The king who was pinned

Everything follows from the king's dependence, so it must be seen exactly. Faisal came to the throne of Iraq with no foot of Iraqi ground of his own, no Iraqi army, no Iraqi base — a Hejazi prince the French had thrown off the throne of Syria the moment he had no great-power backing to keep him on it. The British chose him, in the plainest words of the record, because he was "vulnerable enough to remain dependent on their support," and Faisal, whose Syrian catastrophe had taught him with perfect clarity what becomes of an imported king when his sponsor withdraws, understood his own position without illusion: the monarchy depended on Britain, and so he maintained, throughout, a moderate approach in his dealings with the British, whatever the pressure from his nationalists.

Here is the linchpin of the entire default, and it is the point on which this order differs from every feudal order that grew in its own soil. A native king has a base of his own — his demesne, his own armed men, his own standing among his people — and can, at need, act against his barons or his rivals on his own account, because he does not depend on any one of them for his existence. The imported king has no base but the sponsor's backing. And this means that the apex itself — the thing the whole arrangement is built to be loyal *to* — is pinned to the sponsor exactly as the barons are pinned to the apex. The king defends the sponsor's arrangement in order to defend himself, because without the sponsor he has no floor, no army, no capacity of any kind, and stands at the mercy of everyone the arrangement holds down: the Shia majority who never accepted him, the tribes who bent only to force, the nationalists who wanted him free of Britain or gone, the Kurds who wanted out altogether. The imported king keeps the sponsor's arrangement in place by default, whatever he

says in public, because the arrangement is the only thing between him and all of them. The dependence that made him useful to Britain is the same dependence that made him, at the apex, the default's deepest pin.

The barons, made and kept dependent

Below the throne the sponsor engineered the same dependence, deliberately, at every level, so that no beneficiary anywhere in the structure held a position that did not run back to the arrangement and could not be taken away by it. The Sharifian officers were given the state — the army, the ministries, the cabinets — a state that existed only because the arrangement had called it into being, so that their offices were the arrangement's to confer and to strip. The tribal shaykhs were given the land — vast stretches of formerly Ottoman ground, registered in their own names by the Residency — a title the arrangement had created and could revoke. The Assyrian proxy was given British protection, its very survival staked on the sponsor's presence. Each of the manufactured beneficiaries this study has already met was pinned, and pinned by the same pin: he held what he held by the arrangement's gift, and would lose it if the arrangement fell.

And the engineering went one turn deeper than mere distribution, into a refinement the record states outright. The British cultivated the tribal shaykhs not only to hold the countryside but, in the sources' own words, "as a means of insuring the king's dependence" — a counter-weight set deliberately against the throne, so that the king could not build a base among the tribes and lean on them, and had therefore to lean on Britain. The default was constructed in interlocking layers of mutual dependence, each beneficiary pinned to the arrangement and balanced against the others, so that the one thing every one of them relied upon, and the only thing capable of holding them all together, was the sponsor at the very top. And the whole of it was made constitutional at the founding: when the 1922 treaty had to be ratified, the constituent assembly was engineered for the purpose — a third of its ninety-nine members were pro-British tribal shaykhs, their loyalty secured by grants of Ottoman land — so that the pinned beneficiaries would outvote the nationalists and ratify with their own hands the treaty that granted Britain control of the country. That is the default made visible: the men the arrangement had enriched, voting to

maintain the arrangement that had enriched them, and calling it the will of Iraq.

The double game

But the default holds bodies, not loyalties, and here the manufactured arrangement carried a flaw that the organic feudal design did not. The men it had pinned were Arab nationalists — the king by conviction and by the requirements of his own legitimacy, and the Sharifian officers by the very ideology the mandate's own schools had drilled into them — and in these men interest and conviction pulled in opposite directions. Interest pinned them to the arrangement; conviction, and the need to be seen by their own people as something more than the sponsor's creatures, drove them against it. Faisal worked the resulting contradiction as a permanent double game. When a group of nationalists, encouraged by what looked like the king's own opposition to the 1922 treaty, came to him and asked him to sign a telegram to the capitals of the world declaring that Iraq would accept nothing short of total independence, he refused — knowing, the record says, that such a step would likely spell the end of his reign, and knowing that he did not possess anything approaching the social capital he would need to raise a popular rising against the British should they turn on him. He courted the nationalists for his legitimacy and defended the arrangement for his survival, and the narrow gap between the two was the whole of the space in which he was free to move. The Sharifian officers ran the same double game from below, administering a British-made state with one hand while pressing, with the other, for the independence their creed demanded. The default held them all — but it held them by the interest and against the conviction, and a pin driven against a man's conviction is a pin under strain.

The flag that closed the crack

The strain was relieved, and it was relieved by the robe's own fuse. The self-liquidating mandate had promised, from the first day, an ending — and that promised ending was made the release valve for the beneficiaries' nationalism. The Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 and the flag-independence of 1932 gave the

nationalist beneficiaries the form of the thing they demanded: sovereignty, a seat at Geneva, the end of the mandate, the name of a free country. And beneath the form the substance of the arrangement was kept entire — the British airbases, the oil, the alliance, the retained control, and, most of all, the beneficiaries' own positions, the officers still holding the state and the shaykhs still holding the land. The nationalists got their flag; the arrangement kept its power; every beneficiary kept his office and his acres. The default and the nationalism, which had pulled against each other, were made to converge on the single point of flag-independence, which satisfied the conviction's form and the interest's substance in one stroke. This is why the robe and the default interlock so tightly in this order: the robe's promised ending was precisely the device that allowed the default to survive the nationalism of its own beneficiaries, by handing the nationalism a flag while keeping the whole arrangement standing underneath it.

When the machine was tested

But a flag does not satisfy the deepest nationalists, who will not be content with the form of freedom while the substance stays in the sponsor's hands, and the moment the two men who had held the machine together were gone — Faisal himself, who died in 1933, and the mandate's restraint, which ended in 1932 — the pinned beneficiaries the arrangement had formed began to turn upon it. The army, and above all the Sharifian nationalist officers whom the mandate's schools had raised on the creed of Arab independence, moved to seize the state: first in October 1936, in the coup of General Bakr Sidqi, the first military coup of the modern Arab world, which killed a Sharifian minister and made the first breach in the constitution; and then, in April 1941, in the coup of the Golden Square — four colonels of Sharifian origin, precisely the class the arrangement had manufactured and the schools had formed — who overthrew the pro-British regent and premier, installed Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, moved to restrict British troop movements under the 1930 treaty, sought the aid of the Axis powers, and laid siege to the Royal Air Force base at Habbaniya.

Here the machine that had appeared to run itself was tested to destruction, and in the testing its true nature was laid bare. The regent, the arrangement's

own linchpin, fled — and he fled to the RAF base, to the floor's own ground, because the floor was the only thing that had ever really held him up. And Britain cashed the floor in. It invoked the 1930 treaty — the very substance that flag-independence had been designed to preserve — landed troops at Basra, held Habbaniya with the RAF and the Assyrian levies and Indian battalions, broke the siege, drove on Baghdad, and within a single month had put the Golden Square to flight, restored the regent and the pro-British government, and reoccupied the country it had granted independence nine years before. The default, when its own manufactured beneficiaries turned against it, did not hold itself up. It had to be re-imposed by force. And that is the fact that reveals what the self-running arrangement had always been: not a machine that ran on its own, but a machine the sponsor had been holding up the entire time, whose self-running was an appearance sustained by a floor that stood ready in the background, and that had to step forward and hold the thing by hand the instant the appearance failed.

Reading elite coordination and the default against the framework

The case returns the framework a distinction it needs and confirms two findings that follow from it.

The distinction is between two kinds of self-running order, which look alike in quiet times and are opposite in their foundations. One runs on the belief of the ruled: the robe has taken so deeply that the governed hold the arrangement rightful and uphold it on their own conviction, and such an order needs no floor to speak of, because the ruled would not defect even if they could. The other runs on the engineered self-interest of a set of beneficiaries: each holds a position conferred by the arrangement and wholly dependent on it, so that in defending his own position he maintains the apex and the arrangement, by default, without command. British Iraq is entirely the second kind, and the second kind has a definite and consequential profile. It is cheap to engineer, because it requires only that positions be conferred and made dependent, not that a population's belief be won. It produces a default among the beneficiaries that is remarkably tight — tighter, in a sense, than an organic feudal order's,

because in the manufactured arrangement no beneficiary holds anything that predates or would outlast the arrangement, and so none can defect without losing everything at once. But it is narrow, and it is floor-dependent. Narrow, because the default reaches only the beneficiaries — the imported king, the officer class, the landed shaykhs, the armed minority — while the majority, who hold no conferred position and are pinned by nothing, are held not by the default at all but by the floor beneath it. And floor-dependent, because the pins hold only so long as the floor makes defection fatal: the entire engineered self-interest rests on the credible certainty that to break with the sponsor is to lose everything, and that certainty *is* the floor. Let the floor recede, and the interest-based default has no reservoir of belief under it to fall back upon; it does not erode by degrees but gives way all at once. This is why the manufactured order is at the same time so stable and so brittle — stable while the floor stands and the beneficiaries stay pinned, brittle because there is nothing beneath the beneficiaries but the floor.

From this the two findings fall out. The first is that the imported apex completes the manufactured default rather than merely occupying it: because the imported king has no base of his own, the apex itself is pinned to the sponsor, and defends the sponsor's arrangement in order to defend itself — so that the import which bought a face with borrowed legitimacy bought, in the same act, a face bound by its own rootlessness to hold the sponsor's arrangement up by default. The king's dependence is not a flaw in the design; it is the design, for a king who could stand without the sponsor could also turn against him, and a king who cannot stand without the sponsor is a king who must keep the arrangement standing as long as it keeps him. The second is that the default was layered and floor-guaranteed: on the daily business of governing, the machine went the way of the Sunni-Sharifian elite who ran the state; on the sovereign question of whether the arrangement itself would stand, it went the sponsor's way, because at the crunch every beneficiary preferred the arrangement to its collapse; and when the beneficiaries the arrangement had formed at last tried to break the sovereign default, the floor was cashed in and the arrangement restored by force. A machine that runs on engineered self-interest rather than belief runs itself only so long as the floor stands visibly behind it — and the proof is that when the machine's own parts turned, the

sponsor had to come back and hold it up with his hands. What the majority made of an arrangement that had never pinned them, and never meant to, and what happened on the day the floor finally receded and there was no sponsor left to come back, are the last things this study has to follow.

A note on sources. Faisal's selection as a figure "vulnerable enough to remain dependent" on British support, his Syrian precedent, and his consequent "moderate approach" toward Britain are from the standard record and scholarship (and the summaries in the standard reference works). His refusal of the nationalists' 1922 independence telegram — his knowledge that it "would likely spell the end of his reign" and that he lacked the "social capital" to raise a rising — follows the scholarship (Ali A. Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq*, and the accounts drawing on it). The British cultivation of the tribal shaykhs "as a means of insuring the king's dependence," the engineering of the 1922 constituent assembly (roughly a third of its ninety-nine members pro-British shaykhs secured by grants of Ottoman land), and the ratification of the treaty are from the standard record (Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, and the reference literature). The Sharifian officer class, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 and the flag-independence of 1932 preserving the airbases, oil, and alliance, the death of Faisal in 1933, the Bakr Sidqi coup of October 1936, and the Golden Square coup of April 1941 (its four ex-Sharifian nationalist colonels, Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, the approach to the Axis, the siege of RAF Habbaniya, the regent's flight to the base, the British re-invasion under the 1930 treaty using the RAF, the Assyrian levies, and Indian troops, the restoration of the regent, and the reoccupation to 1947) follow the standard record and scholarship (Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Reeva Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars*; Mohammad Tarbush, *The Role of the Military in Politics: A Case Study of Iraq to 1941*; Hanna Batatu). The 1958 revolution is noted here in prospect and rendered in a later module. Modern scholarship is paraphrased and credited; contested points are noted as such.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

A GROUP OF ALIENS

Module 9 · Plurality or Foreclosure — whether the three monopolies of violence, wealth, and trusted interpretation were held by one coalition or separated into hands that could check it; and in an order built to be run by an installed minority, how the majority was not admitted late but foreclosed at the founding — its one uncaptured counterweight, the Shia clerical authority, broken by deporting its leaders as foreigners, and the majority itself defined out of the nation by a law of nationality — while the risings this produced were crushed by the floor and never once became the agent of change

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

The question, at the scale of the realm

The question of this module is not how many men were allowed to mark a ballot; it is a question about where power was held, and whether it was held by one hand or by several that could check one another. An order rests on three monopolies — the means of violence, the means of wealth, and the trusted interpretation that a people cannot check for itself and must take on authority. Liberty, in the sense this series can measure, is simply what obtains when those three are not all captured by a single coalition: when the men who command the soldiers are not the same men who own the wealth who are not the same men who pronounce on what is true and lawful and sacred, so that each is checked by the others. Foreclosure is what obtains when they are captured together. So the question to put to British Iraq is not whether it held elections — it held many — but whether violence, wealth, and trusted interpretation were separated into hands that could check the apex, or gathered into one; and the way to answer it is to inventory the counterweights the apex did not own, name each, and judge it genuine or captured, and then ask not

merely whether the order was plural but precisely where it was plural and where it was foreclosed.

The three monopolies, and the one hand

Take the three in turn. The means of violence were captured entire by the ruling coalition: the Royal Air Force that was the floor, the army whose officer corps was Sunni and Sharifian, the armed levies drawn from the dependent minority. There was no armed counterweight the coalition did not own; the tribes that had once balanced the towns were disarmed or bombed, and every rising, as this module will show, was broken by the floor. The means of wealth were captured as well: the great new revenue was the oil rent, and the oil was held by the foreign companies and the rent by the state; the land was held by the shaykhs, and the shaykhs had been bought into the coalition with the titles the Residency registered in their names. There was no independent propertied class standing outside the arrangement and able to fund a challenge to it. And the trusted interpretation — the schools that taught the nation its history, the official press, the whole apparatus of formation — was captured too, cut in the single Arab-nationalist key an earlier module described. With one exception. There was, in the whole of the realm, exactly one authority of interpretation that the ruling coalition did not own, and the drama of this module is the story of how it was taken.

The one thing the apex did not own

That authority was the Shia clerical establishment — the marja'iyya of Najaf and Karbala, the grand mujtahids whose rulings the majority of the country's people were bound in conscience to obey. It was the single genuine counterweight in the realm, and it was genuine for precise reasons: it held the trusted interpretation of the majority's own faith; it was funded independently, by the alms the faithful paid directly to it, and so owed the state nothing; it was transnational, its authority reaching across the border into Persia and beyond, and so could not be enclosed; and it commanded the belief of most of the people in the country, which the state did not. It was, in the framework's exact terms, a monopoly of trusted interpretation held in a hand the apex could not

reach — and the apex understood the danger perfectly. As early as December 1921 Faisal told the British ambassador, without circumlocution, that until the influence of the mujtahids was broken no satisfactory progress could be made. The one uncaptured monopoly in the country was marked for capture from the very first.

The founding the majority would not legitimate

The confrontation came, as such confrontations do, over the founding itself. The constituent assembly elected between 1922 and 1924 was to perform the three founding acts of the state — to draft its constitution, to lay down its electoral law, and, above all, to ratify the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty that bound the country to Britain — and the marja'iyya answered the founding with the one weapon an interpretive authority possesses: it refused to grant legitimacy. The grand mujtahid Mahdi al-Khalisi issued a fatwa forbidding the Shia to take part in the elections at all, so that they should not lend the sanction of their participation to a government set up by a foreign power; and enough of the majority obeyed him that the first attempt at the elections simply failed. This is the thing the framework names as the excluded turning the order's own legitimating language back upon it. The order claimed to stand on the consent of the governed — the plebiscite that had made the king, the assembly that would make the constitution, the whole vocabulary of the will of Iraq — and the authority that held the majority's conscience withheld that consent, and in withholding it exposed the founding as a thing the majority of the country would not authorise. The order had asked to be legitimated by the people, and the people's own interpreters had said no.

A group of aliens

The apex did not concede. It repressed, and the form the repression took is the signature of the whole order. In June 1923 Faisal's government amended the law of immigration to permit the deportation of foreigners found engaging in activity against the state, and then it deported the mujtahids — Mahdi al-Khalisi first, expelled from the country on the twenty-fourth of June — and it justified the act in words worth setting down exactly. It was not to be tolerated,

the government declared, that "a group of aliens, who do not have any interest in the independence of the Arab Kingdom, fabricate their appalling words in the name of Islam and post them on walls." Consider what was done and how it was named. The religious leaders of the majority of the population were expelled from the country as aliens — as foreigners with no stake in the nation — and the fact that al-Khalisi himself was an Arab, and not a Persian at all, did not stay his deportation for a moment. The other great mujtahids of Najaf left in protest, and found when they came to negotiate their return that they negotiated from weakness, and were broken as a political force even where they endured as a religious one. The one genuine counterweight in the realm had been captured — not bought, as the shaykhs had been bought, but expelled — and the instrument of its capture was the device of defining its holders out of the nation they lived in.

The law that defined the majority out

That device was then made general, and permanent, and legal. The Nationality Law of 1924 sorted the inhabitants of the new state by whether they were registered as former Ottoman subjects or as Persian ones, and those it placed in the second category — those of what the law's own vocabulary called *taba'iyya*, Iranian dependency — were marked as not fully of the nation. The category caught a great many of the Shia, and caught them by an old irony: under the Ottomans, numbers of Arab Shia had registered themselves as Iranian subjects precisely to escape the taxes and the conscription of the Sunni state that ruled them, and now that old defensive evasion was frozen into a permanent disability, so that a large part of the majority stood legally defined as foreign in the land of its birth, its citizenship and its vote and its claim to office all clouded by a status the state could invoke against it whenever it chose. The charge would be revived, decades later, to justify the mass deportation of Shia across the same eastern border — but the instrument was forged here, at the founding, and it is the deepest of the mechanisms of foreclosure, because it completes from the other side the formation this study described earlier: the school had defined the nation as Sunni and Arab, and the nationality law defined the Shia majority as standing outside it. They are one operation seen

twice — the making of the demos and the foreclosing of the majority from it, cut by the same hand to the same measure.

The periphery

And at the edge of the realm stood the Kurds, foreclosed not by the pen but by the aeroplane. Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji had raised an autonomous Kurdistan in the northern mountains and had himself proclaimed its king; the Royal Air Force bombed his towns and his tribes through 1923 and 1924, Sulaymaniyah was reoccupied, and Mahmud was driven across the border into Persia to carry on a guerrilla war until his capture years later. The Kurds were held by the floor and foreclosed from the Arab state they had never asked to join, the autonomy the first post-war settlement had promised them long since a dead letter. The order was plural nowhere, and foreclosed at both its majority and its periphery at once.

Reading plurality or foreclosure against the framework

The case returns one refinement to the framework, sharpens the module's central distinction on the Iraqi evidence, and holds firm to the series' hardest caveat.

The refinement is that the foreclosure of a *majority* is the signature of the installed-minority order, and that it demands an instrument the foreclosure of a subordinate group does not. An ordinary colonial order forecloses a majority it rules frankly, as an alien power over a subject people, and needs no fiction to do it beyond force. An installed-minority order forecloses a majority in whose name it claims to rule, and that is a harder thing to accomplish, because a majority cannot simply be out-numbered or out-voted — it is the numbers. It can only be foreclosed by being defined out of the demos altogether. So the installed minority forecloses the majority by denaturalisation: it expels the majority's leaders as aliens, and it defines the majority itself, or a great portion of it, as foreign by a law of nationality — and the manufactured nation of the settlement is thereby completed, the "nation" narrowed to the minority coalition and the majority placed, in law and in the official account of who belongs, outside the nation that governs in its name. And where all three

monopolies are held by one coalition, the single counterweight it cannot purchase — an independent authority of interpretation, a rival faith funded and staffed beyond the apex's reach — it cannot leave standing and cannot buy, and so must expel; the deportation of the mujtahids as "a group of aliens" is the precise moment at which the last uncaptured monopoly in the realm was taken into the one hand.

On the module's own question the verdict is therefore plain. The order was foreclosed at its majority and at its periphery, and it was genuinely plural nowhere, because the three monopolies were held throughout by a single coalition. What had the appearance of politics — the palace against the officers against the shaykhs, the falling cabinets and the coming coups — was contestation among the captors and not a separation of the monopolies into hands that could check one another: faction-fighting within the captured core, which an order can sustain indefinitely without becoming in the least degree plural.

And the caveat must be held without flinching, because the material invites the myth. The foreclosed majority pressed against the order repeatedly across these years — in the great revolt of 1920, in the boycott that failed the first elections, in the tribal risings of the mid-Euphrates in 1935 and 1936 — and not once did that pressure become the agent that changed the order. Every rising was broken by the floor, the aircraft over the villages and the army in the towns; and some of the risings were not even the majority's own act but the instrument of rival factions of the ruling minority, Sunni politicians stirring the Shia tribes to bring down a rival's government and then leaving them to be bombed. The majority was present at every opening as soldier and crowd and body count, and never once as the proximate cause. To narrate this as the excluded majority rising against its foreclosure and, in time, prevailing would be the dignifying myth the whole series exists to refuse. The majority was foreclosed; its risings were crushed; and when the order at last broke, it broke — as the next module shows — from a fracture within the elite that held it, and not from the rising of the people it had shut out.

A note on sources. Faisal's statement that no satisfactory progress could be made until the influence of the mujtahids was broken is quoted from the scholarship (Kalantari, "Protecting the Citadel of Islam," *The Muslim World*, 2020). Mahdi al-Khalisi's 1922 fatwa forbidding Shia participation in the constituent-assembly elections, the resulting boycott, and the failure of the first elections follow the standard record (and the biographical record of al-Khalisi). The purpose and conduct of the 1922–1924 constituent assembly (to draft the constitution, enact an electoral law, and ratify the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922; the indirect franchise; the treaty ratified only after the High Commissioner threatened to dissolve the assembly) are from the standard record. The June 1923 amendment of the immigration law and the deportation of Mahdi al-Khalisi on 24 June 1923, with the government's justification — "a group of aliens, who do not have any interest in the independence of the Arab Kingdom, fabricate their appalling words in the name of Islam and post them on walls" — are quoted as reproduced in the scholarship (Kalantari), which also records that al-Khalisi was an Arab and that the leading Najaf mujtahids left in protest and returned weakened. The Nationality Law of 1924 and the category of *taba'iyya* (registration as Persian rather than Ottoman, "Iranian dependency"), and its later use to justify mass deportations, follow the scholarship (the Carnegie Endowment analysis; Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*). The suppression of Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji's autonomous Kurdistan by the RAF (1923–1924) and his later flight and capture, and the 1935–1936 Shia revolts of the mid-Euphrates and their suppression by Bakr Sidqi and the air force (with some risings instigated by rival Sunni factions), are from the standard record. Modern scholarship (Nakash; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Hanna Batatu; Elie Kedourie) is paraphrased and credited; contested figures are given as ranges. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.

TWO OR THREE ROUNDS EACH

*Module 10 · Change and Collapse — how the order ended, read
from above and not from the street: the mandate's end in 1932
was no collapse but the self-liquidating robe firing, the floor
holding and the arrangement continuing under a flag; and when
the order finally fell, in 1958, it fell not because the ruled at last
beat the floor — they never once did — but because the metropole's
floor emptied without cracking, the reach written off after Suez, so
that the officers the arrangement had formed walked into the
apex against almost no defence, and reloaded the same shape
under a new name*

*A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as
tested, not revealed*

The change that was not a collapse

The mandate ended in 1932, and the first thing to see about that ending is that it was not the order changing. When the self-liquidating robe fired — when Iraq took up its flag, entered the League as the first mandate to reach independence, and the tutelage was formally discharged — nothing beneath the flag was altered. The treaty of 1930 kept the British airbases and the right to move British troops across the country; the oil stayed with the foreign consortium and the rent with the state; the imported dynasty kept its throne, the Sharifian officers kept the ministries, the shaykhs kept the land the Residency had registered in their names, the majority stayed foreclosed, and the floor stood exactly where it had stood. The mandate's end was a change of the order's name and not of the order — the very thing the robe had promised from its first day, the form of freedom granted so that the substance of control could be kept. So a study of how this order actually changed cannot stop at the flag of 1932. The order the mandate built outlived the mandate by twenty-six

years, and to watch it change we have to follow it to the morning it fell — and to be exact, against every temptation, about who did the felling.

The graveyard of risings

Begin with what did not fell it, because the whole framework of this series turns on it. The order was not changed by the people it ruled, for the plain reason that the people it ruled could not change it. A durable order is an armed settlement, and an armed settlement is altered only by those who command organised force; the peasant and the tribesman and the town crowd command none, and against an intact floor they lose, with a regularity that approaches a law. The Iraqi record is a straight confirmation. The great revolt of 1920, the largest rising the country produced, was broken by the army and the aeroplane. The Shia tribal risings of the mid-Euphrates in 1935 and 1936 were broken by Bakr Sidqi and the air force, the villages bombed into submission. The Kurdish risings of Shaykh Mahmud were broken by the RAF across a decade. Every rising of the ruled against the standing floor was crushed — and some of them were not even the ruled's own initiative but the instrument of one faction of the elite, Sunni politicians stirring the Shia tribes to bring down a rival's government and leaving them to be bombed for it. The anger of the ruled was the constant, present in every year of the order's life; the floor was the variable, and the floor held. So when the order at last fell, the explanation cannot be that the people were finally angry enough. The anger explains nothing that was constant. Something changed above.

The drift

What changed above was the coercive instrument itself. The arrangement had built an army to man the manufactured nation and had formed its officers, in the schools an earlier module described, on the creed of Arab nationalism — and across the decades that army drifted from being the arrangement's instrument into being an autonomous power that disposed of the arrangement's governments. The drift is worth naming as such, because in this order the drift is the collapse's actual mechanism. It began in October 1936, when General Bakr Sidqi carried out the first military coup of the modern Arab

world, overthrew the civilian government, killed a Sharifian minister, and made the first breach in the constitution — a faction of the elite, the officer corps, seizing the state from another faction. After that the coup was in the country's bloodstream: cabinets rose and fell at the officers' pleasure, and it became understood that the way to power ran through the barracks. It reached its mandate-era peak in the Golden Square of 1941, the four nationalist colonels who seized the state and tried to break the arrangement's tie to Britain outright. The order the mandate had built — an imported chair held up by an engineered default and a foreign floor — was drifting, module by module and coup by coup, toward rule by the army it had raised. And the thing that had built the army had lost control of it.

The floor that came back — and then did not

The drift was contained, once, and the containing shows exactly what held the order up. In 1941, when the officers seized the state and moved against the arrangement, the metropole's floor was still credible: Britain re-invaded, broke the coup at Habbaniya, drove to Baghdad, restored the regent and the pro-British government by force, and re-sealed the drift. The floor came back. What changed between 1941 and 1958 was not in Iraq at all. It was the floor, and the floor emptied at the metropole. Britain came out of the Second World War exhausted and effectively bankrupt, shedding its empire — India gone in 1947 — and no longer able to carry the imperial reach it had carried between the wars. And then, in 1956, came Suez: the failed Anglo-French descent on Egypt that shattered what remained of British prestige in the Arab world and left the pro-British Iraqi elite — Nuri al-Said, the architect of the Western-aligned Baghdad Pact, and the young king Faisal II, who had backed the British attack on Nasser's Egypt — fatally compromised, tied to a metropole that had just been humiliated and was visibly going home. Mark precisely what emptied and what did not. The floor did not crack. Britain kept its army, kept its bases in the region, kept the physical reach it had used in 1941. What it lost was the credibility and the will to use that reach to prop the Iraqi arrangement up again — and the writing-off of a reach one still physically possesses is a distinct and dateable event, an accounting of cost and prestige made in the metropole, not a defeat suffered in the colony. The date of the writing-off is Suez. After it, the

certainty that had underwritten the whole engineered default — that to move against the arrangement was to bring the sponsor's floor down on your head — was simply no longer true, and everyone in Baghdad could feel that it was no longer true.

Two or three rounds each

So when the officers moved again, in 1958, there was no floor behind the arrangement to come back. On the fourteenth of July, a clandestine network within the army calling itself the Free Officers — led by Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim and Colonel Abdul Salam Arif, disaffected officers of the very army the arrangement had built and the schools had formed — took advantage of an order sending their units toward the Jordanian frontier, turned a brigade on Baghdad instead, and seized the capital before dawn. And the order fell in a single morning, against almost nothing. The men who set out to take the royal palace, the accounts record, carried only two or three rounds of ammunition each, because they did not expect to have to fight, and they did not. The king, the crown prince and regent Abd al-Ilah, and the rest of the royal family were gathered in the palace courtyard and cut down with a machine gun; Nuri al-Said was caught the next day in disguise and shot; and the bodies were mutilated and dragged through the streets and hung from lampposts by the Baghdad crowd. Only a handful of Iraqis lifted a hand in the monarchy's defence. Here the finding of the earlier module on the default comes due at the last. The manufactured order, which had no reservoir of belief beneath its beneficiaries — nothing under them but the floor — fell frictionlessly the instant the floor was gone, because there was nothing left to hold it up. An order that runs on engineered self-interest and a foreign floor, and never once on the conviction of the ruled, does not decline by degrees or hand power over by negotiation. It drops all at once, and it dies violently, because when the floor empties no one beneath it will fight for it, and the pins that held every position perfectly while the floor stood hold nothing at all when it goes.

The people's role, and the reload

Hold the discipline on what this was, because the material invites the myth and the successor order spent decades cultivating it. It was not the people rising. It was a military coup, made by the officers — the counter-elite that the arrangement's own formation had bred — who walked into a vacated apex when the metropole's floor emptied beneath it. The people were the crowd that poured through the gap the officers had already opened: the millions who woke to hear the coup announced on the radio, the mob that mutilated the bodies in the street — present, as the ruled are always present at these openings, as crowd and fuel and body count, and never as the hand that made the opening. And what the officers installed was not plurality; it was a reload of the same shape under a new name. Contemporaries said the coup had merely placed a general on the throne, and they were right: Qasim ruled as the new strongman until he was himself shot in another coup in 1963, which gave way in time to the Ba'ath, and to Saddam. The captured monopolies did not disperse into hands that could check one another; the rentier oil state did not become answerable to its people; the manufactured nation did not heal its welded fracture. All of it persisted and hardened under the republican and then the Ba'athist successors, the imported king's chair drifting at the last into a military dictator's, and the deep structure the mandate had built — the point-resource state floating free above its population, the three monopolies gathered in one hand, the majority foreclosed — reloading beneath each new flag. The dignifying myth is that the Iraqi people rose in 1958 and threw off the monarchy and the empire together. The structural truth is colder: the metropole wrote off the reach after Suez, the officers the mandate had formed walked into the apex, the crowd poured through behind them, and the order that emerged remained, in its bones, the one the mandate had made.

Reading change and collapse against the framework

The case returns one refinement to the framework and banks three findings that follow from it.

The refinement is that the collapse of an imported or mandated order is driven by the metropole's floor emptying rather than by the ruled beating the

floor, and that the emptying can occur without any crack at all. Britain in the 1950s retained its army, its bases, and its physical reach into Iraq entire; what it lost, after a world war's exhaustion and Suez's humiliation, was the credibility and the will to spend that reach on the arrangement again — and the writing-off of a reach one still possesses is a distinct, dateable, essentially fiscal and reputational event, decided at the metropole and not on the ground. The case supplies its own controlled proof: against a materially stronger position in 1941 the floor came back and restored the order by force, and against a materially weaker coup in 1958 it did not come back at all. Nothing the Iraqis did between those two dates accounts for the difference. The difference was an accounting entry made in London.

From this the three findings fall out. The first is that a colonial order collapses in two stages, of which only the second is visible from the street: first the imperial floor empties, the metropole writing off the reach — the necessary condition, made abroad — and then a local counter-elite, here the officers the arrangement's own formation had bred, walks into the vacated apex as the proximate agent, with the ruled as the fuel of the second stage and the author of neither. This is why the risings of the ruled, so reliably crushed against the intact floor, are never the cause even of the collapse they appear to accompany: the collapse waits upon the floor, and the floor waits upon the metropole. The second is that an order which runs on engineered self-interest and a foreign floor, and never on the belief of the ruled, has nothing beneath its beneficiaries to break its fall, and so it does not transfer power but simply drops — frictionlessly, and with the particular violence of the machine-gunned courtyard and the coup that needed no ammunition — the instant the floor is written off; its very tightness in life, every position pinned and the machine seeming to run itself, is exactly what makes its death total, because pins give way together. The third is that the rupture reloaded rather than reformed: it seated a general where the imported king had sat and left the captured monopolies, the rentier state, and the welded fracture intact beneath him, so that the deep shape the mandate had built survived the flag that had briefly covered it and ran on, under new names, toward the strongman it had always been tending to seat. The immediate toll of the transition was small — a royal family, a prime minister, a crowd's afternoon of butchery, some scores of dead — because what

the order coordinated was governance and extraction and not the subsistence of its people, so its fall starved no one; the catastrophe of modern Iraq came later, and came from the reloaded structure, not from the removal of the king. Read at the last as the filter's verdict, 1958 is a finding about the structural fit of an imported, unbelieved order under the pressures this one happened to meet — a metropole that exhausted and repriced, an army it had formed and could not contain — and not a moral verdict on the men who ran it, nor proof that the design was doomed from its first day; it stood thirty-seven years, and then the floor was written off and it fell in a morning, which is the most exact thing that can be said of it.

A note on sources. The end of the mandate in 1932 and the continuity of British control under the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 are established in earlier modules. The crushed risings (the 1920 revolt; the 1935–1936 Shia revolts suppressed by Bakr Sidqi and the air force; the Kurdish risings of Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji), the 1936 Bakr Sidqi coup, and the 1941 Golden Square coup and British re-invasion are established in earlier modules and follow the standard record. The post-war exhaustion of British power, the Baghdad Pact of 1955, the Suez crisis of 1956 and Faisal II's association with the British action against Egypt, and the consequent discrediting of the pro-British Iraqi elite follow the standard record. The 14 July 1958 revolution — the Free Officers under Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif; the diversion toward Baghdad of a brigade ordered to the Jordanian frontier; the seizure of the capital; the killing of King Faisal II, the crown prince and regent Abd al-Ilah, and Nuri al-Said; the mutilation of the bodies; and the minimal resistance (the detail that the assaulting troops carried "only two or three rounds each," and that only a handful defended the monarchy, quoted and paraphrased from the reporting and standard accounts) — is from the standard record and the contemporary reporting. The reload (Qasim's rule and his execution in 1963; the Ba'ath; Saddam Hussein) follows the standard record. The framework of collapse applied here — the four cracks, and the distinction of a floor that empties without cracking — is the project's own (drawing, as the framework does, on Theda Skocpol on state breakdown). Modern scholarship (Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Hanna Batatu; Adeed Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*) is paraphrased and credited; contested figures are given as ranges. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.

SIX HUNDRED OR THREE THOUSAND

Module 11 · The Grim Accounting — the cost of the order counted on every side, and the discovery that it cannot finally be counted: the state built and the first Arab sovereignty won, set in the same breath against the majority foreclosed, the villages bombed, the peasants bound, and the minority the mandate armed and then abandoned, massacred by the state a year after independence in a killing whose dead are given as six hundred or three thousand or six thousand depending entirely on who did the counting — because the order counted its bombs and its barrels and never its dead

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

What the order built

A honest accounting begins with the credit side, at full weight and without the grudging tone that treats a built state as nothing, because a functioning state is one of the great and difficult human achievements and this order built one where none had stood. Out of the three Ottoman provinces that had never been a country, the mandate and the monarchy it installed made a state: a central administration, a national army, a system of courts, a school system that carried literacy and a modern curriculum into towns that had known neither, a railway and roads and irrigation works, the beginnings of an oil industry that would one day have made the country rich. And in 1932 it made something that had never existed before in the modern Arab world — an independent Arab state, seated in its own name at the League of Nations, which Arabs from Morocco to the Gulf marked as a beginning and a proof that the thing could be done. There is real coordination here, and real accomplishment, and some Iraqis who lived through the monarchy would

remember it, against everything that came after, as a gilded age of rising prosperity and relative order. All of that is true, and it is set down first and in earnest, because the discipline of this module is to credit what the order built at its full value and then to count, in the very same breath and at equal weight, what the building cost.

The standing cost

The cost while the order stood was paid mostly not in dramatic death but in lives narrowed, and it must be counted even though it leaves few bodies to number. There was the cost of extraction — the country's principal wealth drawn out for a rent while the owners took the oil. There was the cost of suppression — the bombing of the tribal and Kurdish country, more than nine thousand bombs dropped in a single year, the villages burned and the collective punishment inflicted from the air; and the deportation of the majority's own religious leaders as aliens. There was the cost of foreclosure — a majority shut out of its own state, its clergy expelled, a great part of it defined by law as foreign in its own land; and the Kurds bombed and denied the autonomy they had been promised. And there was the cost of the cost column itself — a peasantry bound by debt to the land of the landlords the order had made, held at subsistence, forbidden to leave. These are lives foreclosed, bound, and held down rather than ended, and they leave little in the way of a body count precisely because their cost was a cost in living narrowed and not in dying — which does not make it small, but makes it, in the ledger, nearly invisible, and it must be entered even where it cannot be numbered.

The founding and the collapse

The costs that did leave bodies are easier to set down and must be separated by kind. The founding cost included the conquest itself — the catastrophe of Kut, some thirteen thousand men lost, most to captivity — and above all the revolt of 1920, in which somewhere between six and ten thousand Iraqis died against a few hundred of the occupiers. The collapse, when it came in 1958, cost by contrast very little in blood: a royal family, a prime minister, a crowd's afternoon of butchery, some scores of dead in all. And the reason it cost so little

is a distinction this accounting must hold, between the combat dead and what may be called the metabolic dead — those killed not by the fighting but by the collapse of the coordination that had been keeping them alive. The order that fell in 1958 had coordinated governance and extraction, not the subsistence of its people; its fall therefore starved no one, and its metabolic dead were nil, and the small toll of the collapse is an exact measure of the fact that what the order did was to rule and to take, not to feed. The catastrophe of modern Iraq came later, and came from the reloaded structure and its wars, and belongs to no ledger the mandate can be handed.

The invoice on the proxy

Between the founding and the collapse falls the killing that is the centre of this module, because it is the place where a cost the mandate had deliberately deferred came due, in full, upon the very instrument the mandate had used. The Assyrians were the Christian minority Britain had armed as its levies — the force that guarded the aerodromes and helped put down the majority's risings — and they had been made, by that role and by the British favour that came with it, an object of the majority's resentment; and at the end of the mandate they were abandoned, their Patriarch's petitions to the League for a guaranteed protection or a homeland refused, as an earlier module showed, two months after the mandate had ended and the power to grant them had lapsed. The invoice came in August 1933, a year after the flag went up. When a dispute over the Assyrians' resettlement and disarmament flared into clashes, the government sent the army north under General Bakr Sidqi, and between the seventh and the eleventh of August the Iraqi army, with Arab and Kurdish tribal irregulars encouraged to loot alongside it, disarmed the Assyrians of the Dohuk and Mosul districts under a flag of truce, separated the men from the women and children, and killed them — machine-gunned in batches in the open, run over by armoured cars to be certain, their villages, sixty-three by one count and more than a hundred by another, burned and stripped. Sidqi returned to Baghdad to a hero's welcome, and forty-nine Kurdish tribes sent the government a letter of thanks, and neither the state that did the killing nor the empire that had armed and abandoned the killed was ever made to answer for it. The Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin would afterwards name Simele

among the atrocities that drove him to coin the word genocide. This is the deferred cost of the minority-proxy floor, paid in full and on the proxy: the minority armed to hold the majority down, then left behind when the ruler withdrew, then destroyed by the state the ruler had built — the precise bill that the study, at the cost column, said the cheap floor had only postponed.

Six hundred or three thousand

And how many Assyrians died at Simele and in the villages around it? The answer is the deepest finding of this module, because there is no answer, and the absence of one is not a gap that further research will fill. The British, who had been complicit in the abandonment and were disinclined to dwell on its result, put the dead at three to six hundred. The Assyrians, who were the dead, put them at three to six thousand. The figure most often repeated falls somewhere between six hundred and three thousand, and the spread from the lowest count to the highest is more than twentyfold, and it will not close, because it is not a measurement at all but an artefact of the order. The state that did the killing had no interest in counting its victims. The power that had armed and forsaken them had an interest in the smaller number. And the victims were a scattered minority whose villages were burned and whose survivors fled into exile, and who left, in place of a record, a contested and grieving memory. The number depends entirely on who wrote it — and that dependence is the exact shape of the whole order's accounting. The order counted, to the decimal, what it valued: the bombs it dropped, nine thousand in a year and every one recorded; the barrels it lifted; the rent it banked; the acres it registered in the shaykhs' names. It did not count what it destroyed: the villagers beneath the bombs, the peasants bound to the land, the majority shut out of the state, the dead at Simele. The powerful leave paper, and the powerless leave silence, and an accounting that mines only the paper will read the silence as absence unless it writes the silence down as an item in its own right. The uncountable dead of Simele are the truest entry in this order's ledger, and they are true precisely in that they cannot be counted.

Reading the grim accounting against the framework

The case discharges a debt the framework had recorded and unfinished, sharpens the module's central discipline on the Iraqi evidence, and holds the two refusals the module exists to hold.

The discharged debt is the minority-proxy floor's. An earlier module recorded that a floor built on a threatened minority is reliable because the minority's whole safety is staked on the ruler, and that this same dependence marks the minority as the majority's enemy, so that the cost of the floor is not cancelled but deferred — charged to the proxy, and falling due the day the ruler departs. Simele is that cost paid. The Assyrians bore, in a single week of August 1933, the whole price of the floor they had manned for the mandate, and the two powers who might have been made to account for it — the empire that armed them and the state that killed them — were made to account for nothing. The cheap floor was never cheap. Its bill was merely held over, and presented, in the end, to the ones who had stood on it.

The sharpened discipline is that the grim accounting of such an order cannot be closed, because the order did not keep it, and the not-keeping is itself the finding. The cost fell on the powerless — the bombed, the bound, the foreclosed, the massacred — and the powerless are exactly the people an order does not number. The twentyfold spread in the Simele dead is the measure of it: where the only parties positioned to count are the parties with an interest in a particular count, and the party with the truest claim to be counted has been reduced to silence, the number is not discovered but chosen. So the thinness of the record is not evidence that the cost was slight; it is the filter itself, the same seam that once kept the acts from the auditor now keeping the dead from the historian. The only honest accounting is the one that refuses to let the exactness of the bomb-tallies stand in for the whole, and that enters the uncounted, explicitly, as uncounted.

And the two refusals must both be held, in the same breath, because each alone is a lie. The order built a state, and a state is a genuine good, and the credit is real and entered at full weight. But the conqueror's syllogism — that order is necessary, and therefore that this order was — smuggles the particular in under the general, and it must be refused: that some coordination was needed on this

ground does not make this coordination, with its foreclosed majority and its welded fracture and its armed and abandoned proxy, the necessary or the only kind, and four centuries of Ottoman rule over the same rivers are proof enough that it was not. Yet the opposite error, the sentimental mirror in which the price proves only cruelty and the achievement dissolves, must be refused as well, for the state and the sovereignty and the schools and the oil were made and were not nothing. The whole discipline of the accounting is to hold the two truths at once and let neither erase the other: the mandate built the first independent Arab state, and it armed the minority that state would massacre, and the second sentence is not a footnote to the first.

A note on sources. The credit side — the state, army, courts, schools, infrastructure, and oil industry built under the mandate and monarchy, and the independence of 1932 as the first Arab admission to the League — follows the standard record, as does the later nostalgia for the monarchy as a period of relative order and rising prosperity. The standing costs (extraction, the aerial bombing including the figure of over nine thousand bombs in 1923, the deportation of the mujtahids, the foreclosure of the Shia majority and the Kurds, and the debt-bondage of the peasantry) are established in earlier modules. The founding cost (the siege of Kut, roughly thirteen thousand lost; the 1920 revolt, some six to ten thousand Iraqi dead) and the small toll of the 1958 collapse are from earlier modules. The Simele massacre — the campaign of the Iraqi army under General Bakr Sidqi with Arab and Kurdish irregulars, 7–11 August 1933; the disarming under truce and the executions; the destruction of sixty-three to more than a hundred villages; the roughly twenty thousand refugees; Sidqi's hero's welcome and the letter of thanks from forty-nine Kurdish tribes; the impunity of both Iraq and Britain; and Raphael Lemkin's later citation of Simele in the development of the concept of genocide — follows the standard record and the contemporary account (R. S. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*) and the modern scholarship (Sargon Donabed; Khaldun Husry). The death toll is given as a contested range — a British estimate of roughly three to six hundred, an Assyrian estimate of roughly three to six thousand, and a commonly cited span of six hundred to three thousand — with the divergence attributed, in the text, to the interests of the counting parties and the silence of the victims. Modern scholarship (Hanna Batatu; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*) is paraphrased and credited; all contested figures are given as ranges. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.

THE WELD THAT NEVER FUSED

Module 12 · Convergence and Divergence — reading Iraq against the corpus: the imported chair as the third answer to the one question the whole series turns on, set beside the found chair and the forged one, the convergence explained by position and not by any hidden hand; and the divergence that is the case's deepest finding — that the imported, welded order was the one kind of conquest that never became real, because a belief cannot be imported and a weld is not a fusion — closing on the strongest case for the thing, stated in full and answered without flinching

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude (Anthropic) · held as tested, not revealed

The third answer to one question

This series turns, in the end, on a single question, and the last module's work is to set Iraq beside the others that have been asked it. The question is whether the order a conqueror overran had left a seizable seat — a working apex he could occupy and rule through — because everything downstream of the conquest, its cost and its brittleness and its manner of extraction and its way of ending, follows from the answer. Place the three cases the collection has built in a row and the pattern is plain. In the caliphate of Northern Nigeria the British found a chair: a living throne at the head of a working order, which they occupied, ruling millions through the emirs at almost no cost, because the belief that made the order cheap was already there and already attached to a seat. Among the Kikuyu of Kenya they found no chair at all: an order whose authority had pooled into no apex, no king and no capital, and there they forged a seat where none had been, raising servants of the broken order into chiefs and backing them with the rifle, and paying for the forgery every year for sixty years. Iraq is the third answer, and it is distinct from both. Here the British

found neither a seat to take nor a headless field in which to forge one. They found a decapitated order — an apex that had existed within living memory and had been destroyed, the Ottoman sultan-caliph defeated and the caliphate itself abolished, leaving a surplus of seats none of which the conqueror could occupy: a state-apex annihilated, a clerical apex among the Shia majority that an infidel empire could never sit in, and a scatter of fragments none of which commanded the whole. And so they did the third thing, the last resort on the menu of ways to hold a conquered order: they imported an apex, a king from Arabia with a borrowed sacral prestige and no foot of Iraqi ground, and set him over the country from outside. The found chair, the forged chair, the imported chair — three answers to one question, and Iraq is the case that completes the set.

The convergence among the three is real and it is worth naming precisely, because the naming is the guard against the conspiratorial reading. All three are the same solution in the same family: hold a conquered order cheaply by seating a native-seeming apex, whether one you found, one you forged, or one you fetched, and let the apex do the holding. And the convergence is explained not by any hidden hand, not by a British master-plan applied from a single desk, but by position logic operating at the scale of an empire: a power that has taken a country faces the same problem every time — hold it, and hold it cheaply — and that problem has only a few good answers, so a hundred proconsuls facing it independently converge on the same short menu without conspiring, and draw from it according to what the conquered order happens to offer them. The convergence is the position; the divergence is the ground.

What the ground decided and what the persons chose

The divergences of the Iraqi case fall into two kinds, and keeping them apart is the discipline that stops the reading from collapsing into either determinism or great-man history. Some of what made Iraq particular was decided by the ground, before any Englishman chose anything. The decapitated starting condition — an apex destroyed rather than found intact or never formed — was not Britain's doing; it was the residue of the Ottoman collapse and the abolition of the caliphate, and it was that condition, and not a preference, that

forced the resort to import, because you cannot occupy a seat that has been abolished and you cannot forge one cheaply where a living rival authority already holds the majority's belief. The oil beneath Mosul was in the ground before Britain came, and it was the oil that made the country worth the holding and drew its border to the field's edge. The post-war world that had made annexation unsayable and demanded trusteeship on paper was not of Britain's making either. These were the contextual variables, and they decided much.

But within the room the ground left, persons chose, and their choices were not the only ones available. The settlement made with the Sunni minority against the Shia majority was a choice — the reproduction of the Ottoman arrangement because the Sunni ex-officers were the readier instrument, not because no other settlement could be imagined. The foreclosure of the majority, the deportation of its clergy as aliens, the law that defined a great part of it as foreign — these were chosen. The arming of a vulnerable minority as the proxy that would police the majority and be massacred for it was chosen. The welding of three provinces that had never been one country into a single unitary state, rather than any looser arrangement that might have fitted the fracture rather than fighting it, was chosen. The ground forced the import; the persons chose what kind of order the imported apex would sit atop, and they chose, at nearly every turn, the arrangement that served the sponsor and deferred the cost onto the ruled.

What the case confirms, complicates, and adds

Set against the corpus, the case confirms much of what the series had banked. It confirms the chair variable itself — that the conqueror's whole experience is downstream of the seat — by supplying the third value of it and showing the costs move as the theory says they should. It confirms the colonial bend in every particular the framework predicts: the reversed robe cut for the metropole and the auditor rather than the ruled; the formation withheld from, or cut against, the majority; the seam split not between the ruled and knowledge but between the metropole and what the reserve lived; the extraction sorted so that the ruled were held off the wealth rather than taxed on their own; and the collapse driven by the metropole's will emptying rather than by the ruled beating the floor. It

confirms, too, the hardest of the series' theses, that structural change comes from the fracture and exhaustion of the elite and never from the rising of the ruled — the Iraqi majority rose again and again and was crushed every time, and the order fell only when the metropole wrote off the floor and its own officers walked in.

It complicates the chair typology by enriching it. What had been very nearly a binary — a seat found or a seat forged — becomes a fuller scheme once Iraq is added, because Iraq's starting condition is neither Nigeria's intact apex nor Kenya's headless distribution but a third thing, an apex destroyed, and its answer is neither rent nor forged but imported. The starting conditions run: a seizable apex, a headless field, a decapitated order. The answers run: occupy, forge, import. And the case adds to the family's evidentiary base a set of refinements the collection had not isolated before — the self-liquidating robe that promises its own expiry and thereby invents flag-independence; the floor made cheap by technological reach rather than belief, air control standing to the aeroplane as the register stood to the clerk; the point-resource that de-links the state from its people and funds the floor that holds them off it; the demos that must be manufactured where no single substrate exists, and the fault welded shut that becomes the permanent fracture; the foreclosure of a majority by denaturalisation; the cost column held by delegation rather than density; the two kinds of self-running order, the belief-based and the engineered-self-interest kind; and the floor that empties without cracking, written off at the metropole while every soldier is retained. Each of these is a genuine addition, and each is entered into the record with the case that carried it.

The order that never became real

But the deepest thing the case returns is a refinement to the recursion that lies beneath the whole collection, and it is the divergence that matters most. The recursion is the series' foundational insight: that the conqueror never meets a blank field, only an older order that is itself a former conquest grown, over generations, into the furniture of reality — so naturalised that the people born into it take it for the nature of the world and would be astonished to hear it called an arrangement at all. And the recursion runs forward as well as back: the

colonial order, too, is inherited and inhabited until, in time, it becomes simply the nation. That an order had a beginning does not make it a lie; it makes it a thing that was built and then became real, which is the only kind of order there has ever been. Another case in this collection closed on exactly that forward motion — a conquest inherited and inhabited until it became, at last, just the country's own.

Iraq is the case where the forward motion failed. The order the mandate built was built, as all orders are; but it did not become real, and the reason it did not is the sum of everything this study has counted. You cannot import a belief the majority never held: the Sunni king fetched from the Hejaz meant nothing to the mujtahids of Najaf or the tribes of the Euphrates or the Kurds of the mountains, and the nation declared over them was declared and never believed. A weld is not a fusion: the three provinces were pressed into one state, but the fault between Sunni and Shia and Kurd, which the settlement welded shut rather than healed, never fused into a people and remained the seam the country would run along for the century that followed. And a majority foreclosed from an order never lives into it, and so it never becomes their reality: an order a people is shut out of remains, to that people, a thing done to them and not a world they inhabit, however many decades pass. So the recursion has a limit, and Iraq is the case that finds it. Built-then-real is not automatic. It requires that the build take — that the belief come, over generations, to a population admitted to the order and given time to forget it was ever built — and an imported apex set over a welded fracture above a foreclosed majority is precisely the build that cannot take, because every condition the naturalising of an order requires was, in this one, refused at the founding. The convergence and the divergence are therefore a single fact. Iraq is a conquest like all the others in the corpus — and it is the one that never became just Iraqi, because the imported, welded, foreclosing order is the one kind of conquest that cannot turn into the furniture of reality, and stays instead a construction with its seams showing, a century and more after it was made.

The strongest case, stated and answered

A study that has read an order this coldly owes it, at the last, the best case that can be made for it, stated at full strength and not as a straw thing, and then answered without flinching. Here is that case, and it is not weak.

Britain, its defender would say, built a state where there had been none. It took three provinces that had never been a country and made of them a functioning modern state — an army, a civil service, courts, a school system that carried literacy where there had been little, a railway and roads, an oil industry that would one day have made the country rich — and it did in Iraq the one thing the mandate system was supposed to do and almost nowhere did: it kept the promise and left. Iraq in 1932 became the first Arab state to take its own seat at the League of Nations, a genuine sovereignty and a genuine milestone, and Arabs across the region marked it as the proof that the thing could be done. Faisal was no mere puppet but a real and subtle nation-builder who spent his reign trying to bind the Shia into the state and soften the sectarian edge, and who might, had he lived, have made the weld hold. The alternative to the mandate was not a free and united Iraq; it was chaos, or partition among the Turks and Persians and French, or a longer and bloodier conquest. And the catastrophe that came later — the coups, the dictatorship, the wars, Saddam — was the work of Iraqis, in a country the British had long since left; you cannot lay the crimes of 1988 at the door of a mandate that ended in 1932. Britain built a nation and let it go, and what the nation then did to itself is not the builder's charge.

Every clause of that has truth in it, and the truth must be granted before the answer is made, at full weight and without the grudging tone. The state was built; it was real, and building a working state is a great and difficult thing. The sovereignty of 1932 was real, and it was first, and it mattered. Faisal did try, and his trying was genuine, and the study has shown him recoiling from his own formation-maker's sectarian edge. And the later catastrophe was indeed Iraqi in its hands, planned and carried out by Iraqis long after the British had gone. A reading that denied any of this would be false, and falseness is not permitted here even in a good cause.

But the self-justification laced through the true account must be refused, at three joints, and refused precisely. The claim that the alternative was chaos is the conqueror's syllogism, which smuggles the particular in under the general: that some order was needed on this ground does not make this order — the imported king, the welded fracture, the foreclosed majority, the armed and abandoned proxy — the necessary one or the only one, and four centuries of Ottoman rule over the same rivers are proof that another settlement could hold the ground. What Britain chose was not order against chaos; it was the particular order that served Britain — the compliant apex, the retained bases, the oil — over the several other orders that might have served Iraq. The claim that Britain built a nation and let it go mistakes the fuse in the robe for an act of generosity: Britain did not let Iraq go, it converted the mandate into a treaty that kept the airbases and the oil and the veto, granted the form of independence while retaining the substance of control, and re-invaded in 1941 the moment the arrangement was seriously threatened — so that the celebrated letting-go was a re-dressing of the holding, not an end to it. And the claim that the later catastrophe was Iraqi and not British is true of the hands and false of the bones: the agents were Iraqi, but the structure they seized and drove was mandate-built — the manufactured nation with its welded and unhealed fault, the rentier state floating free above a people it did not need and could not be checked by, the army raised and schooled into the country's standing coup-machine, the majority foreclosed and waiting. Britain did not cause Saddam, and it is unserious to say it did; but it built the machine that a Saddam could capture, and it built it that way because building it that way was cheap and served the sponsor, and it left the machine running when it went.

So the final word on British Iraq is not that it achieved nothing, and not that it was merely cruel, but something harder to hold and truer than either: that it was a real achievement of the wrong thing. It built a state, genuinely, and the state it built was a construction that never became a nation, because the one thing a builder cannot import is the belief that turns a built order into a real one, and the one thing this builder would not do was admit the majority whose belief he would have needed. Britain welded three provinces into a state and called the weld a nation; the weld held while the floor stood behind it and came apart the morning the floor was written off; and the fault it welded shut is the

fault the country has run along ever since. That is the achievement, entire and undenied. And that is the cost, entire and uncanceled. They are not two findings to be balanced against each other. They are one thing seen once, which is the most exact and the least comfortable thing that can be said of the order, and the place where an honest account of it has to end.

A note on sources. This module reads the Iraqi case against the other studies in the *Patterns of Power* collection (*British Northern Nigeria as the found chair; British Kenya as the forged chair; and the wider corpus*), and against the framework's own instruments — the chair variable, the colonial bend, the recursion, and the account of structural change as elite fracture and exhaustion. The factual claims about the Iraqi case (the decapitated starting condition; the imported monarchy; the self-liquidating mandate; air control; the oil concession and the border drawn to the field; the manufactured nation and its welded fracture; the foreclosure of the Shia majority and the Kurds; the delegated cost column and the Assyrian proxy; the collapse of 1958 and its antecedents) are established, with their sources, in the preceding modules, and are not re-argued here. The persistence of the mandate-era sectarian and ethnic fault lines into the country's later history is drawn from the standard scholarship (Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*; Hanna Batatu; Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq* and his later work on the Iraqi state), paraphrased and credited. The strongest counter-position is stated as its serious defenders state it, and answered on the evidence; no figure or attribution is invented, and where the record is contested the contest has been marked in the module that carries it. Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, never revealed.